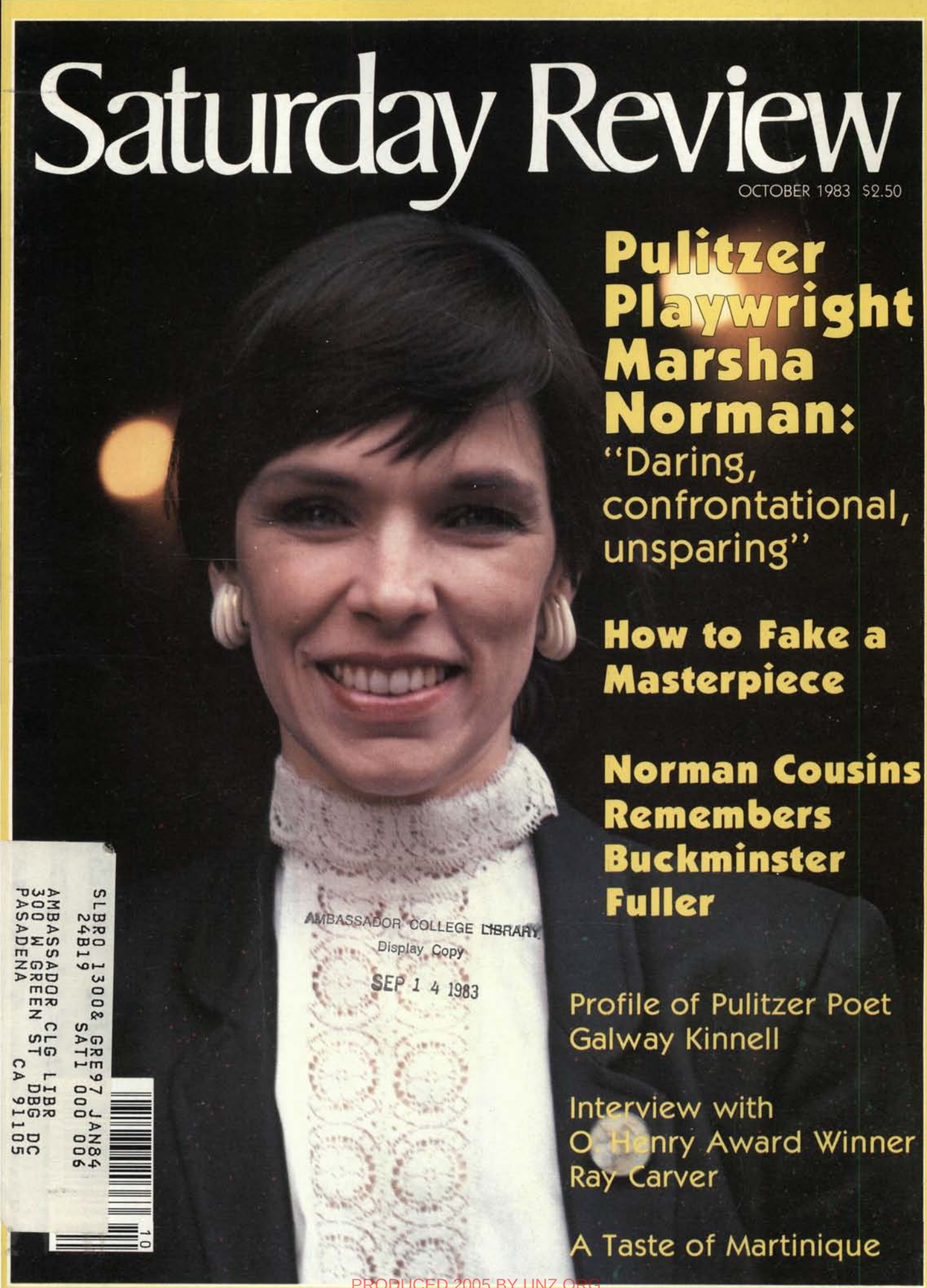
Saturday Review

OCTOBER 1983 $2.50



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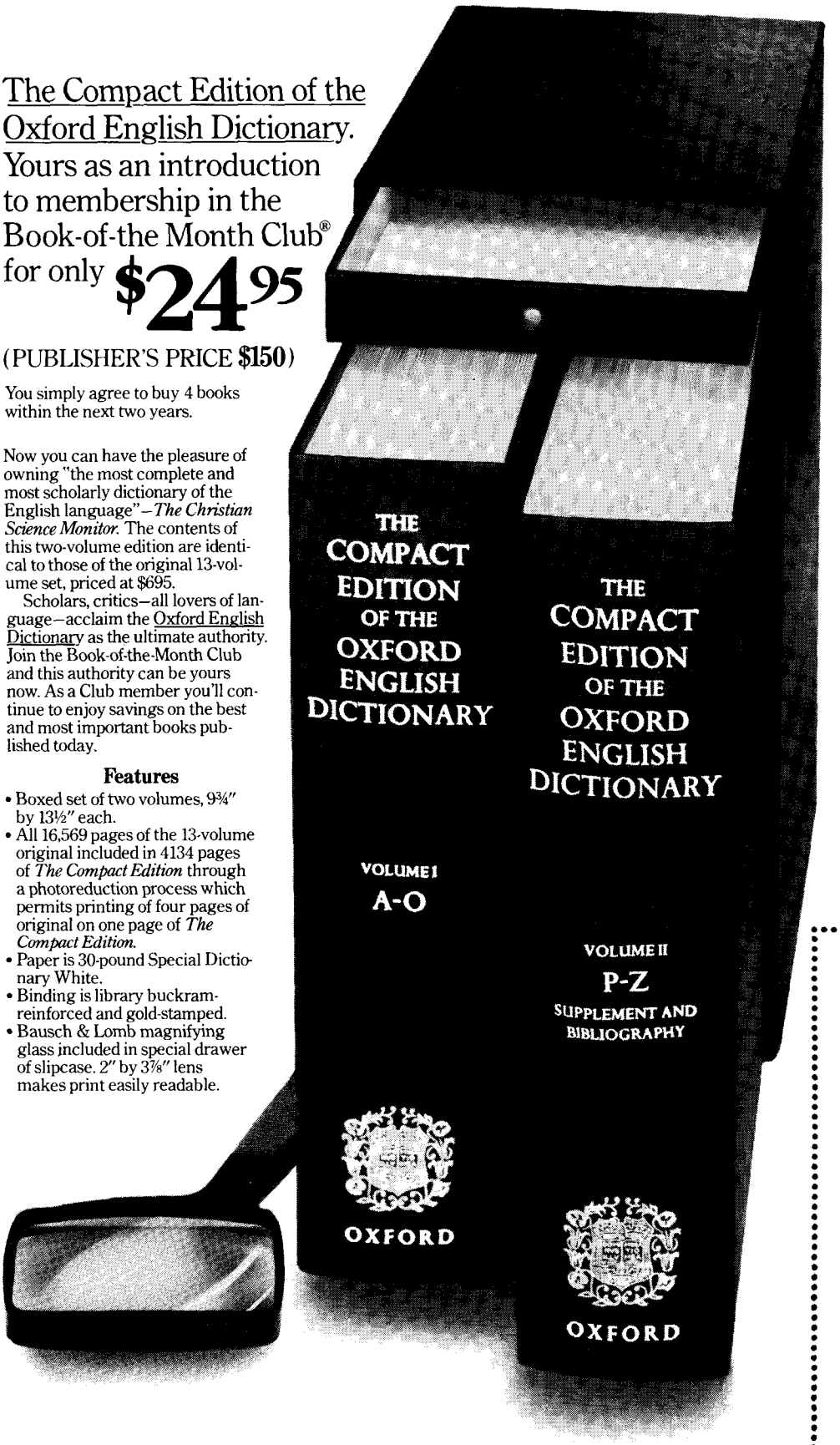

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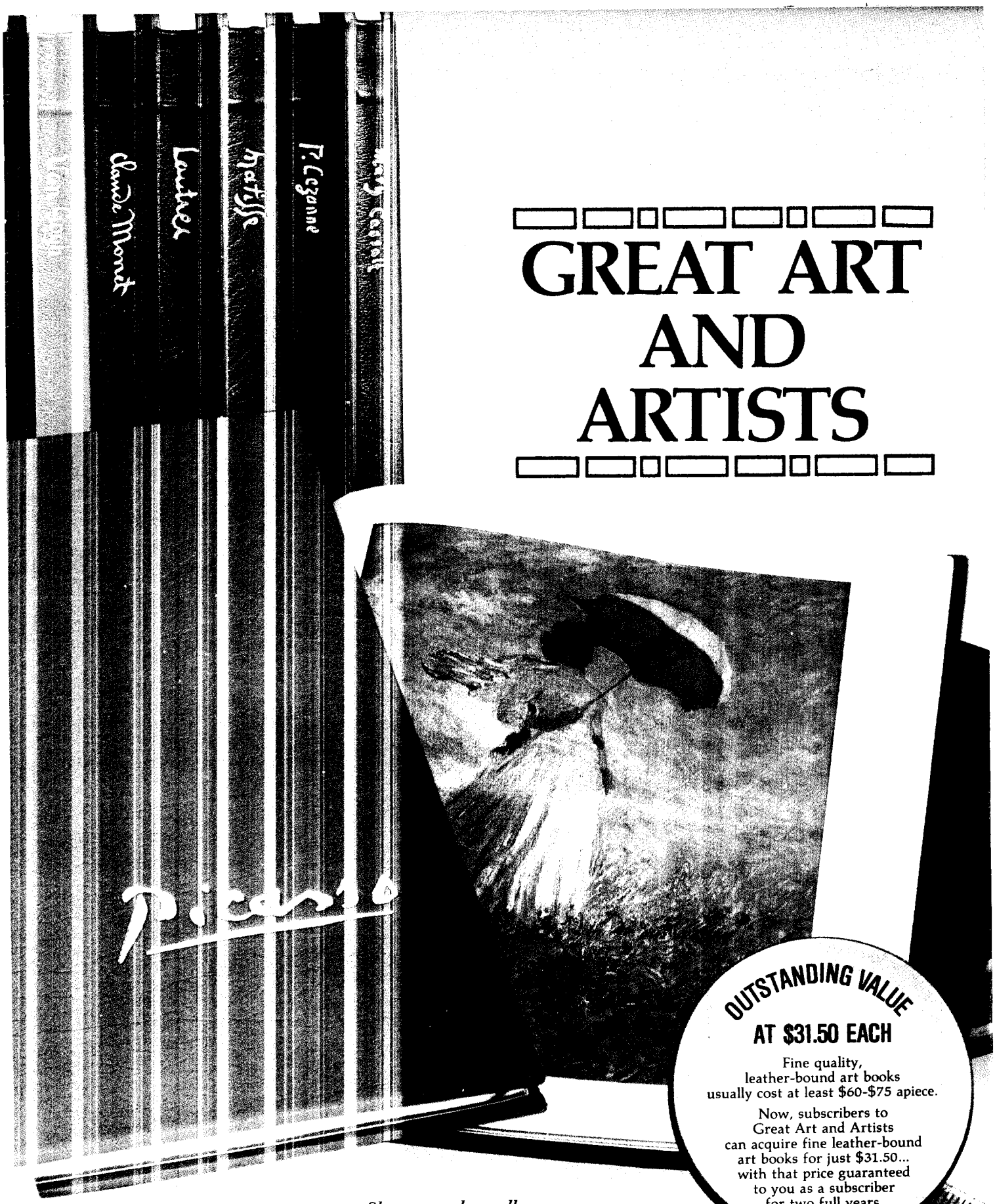

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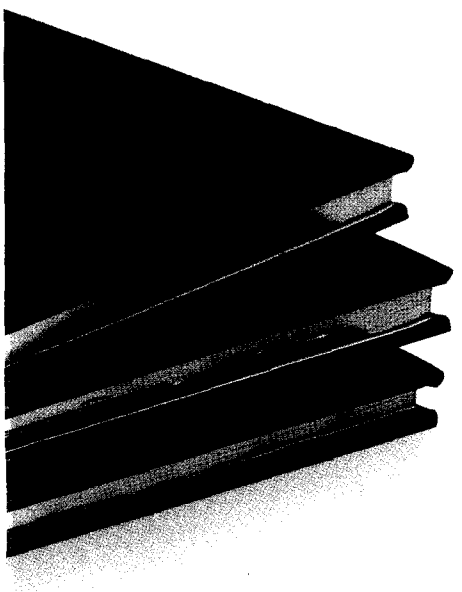

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Girl Reading (La Lecture);
Henri Matisse, 1905-06

Dancer Practicing at Bar;
Edgar Degas, 1877

L'Estaque;
Paul Cezanne, 1884

The Bath;
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Jane Avril;
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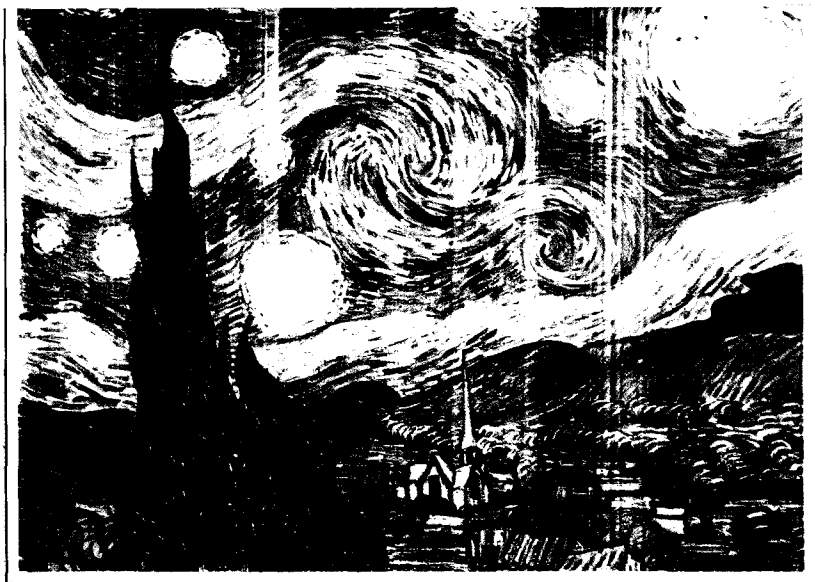

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Terrace;
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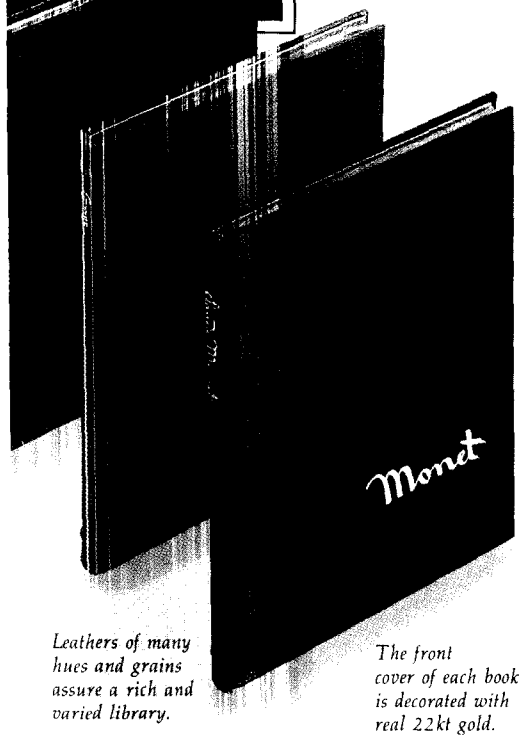
Moulin De La Galette;
Pierre Auguste Renoir, 1876

Woman With a Fan;
Pablo Picasso, 1905



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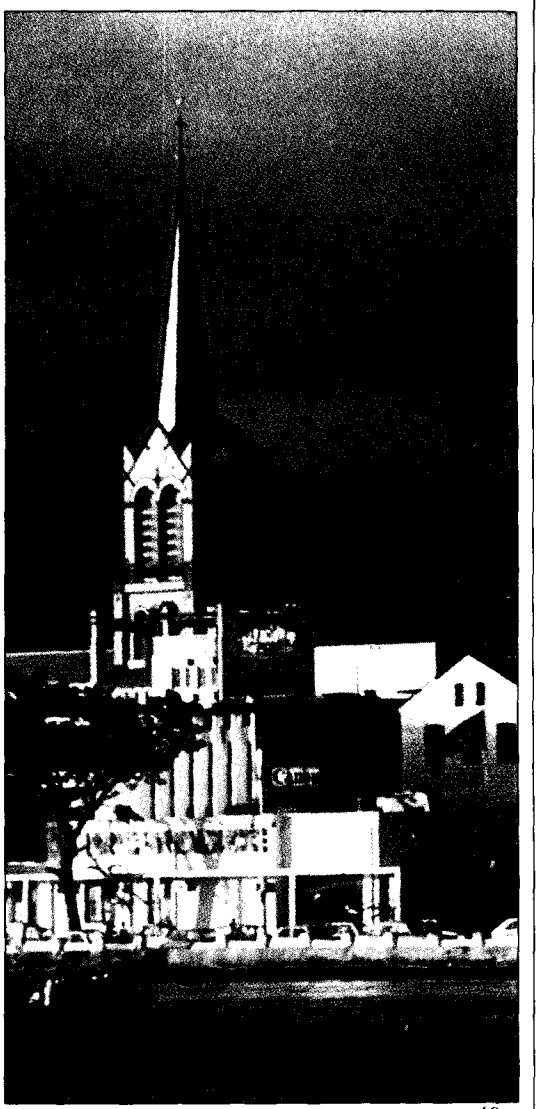

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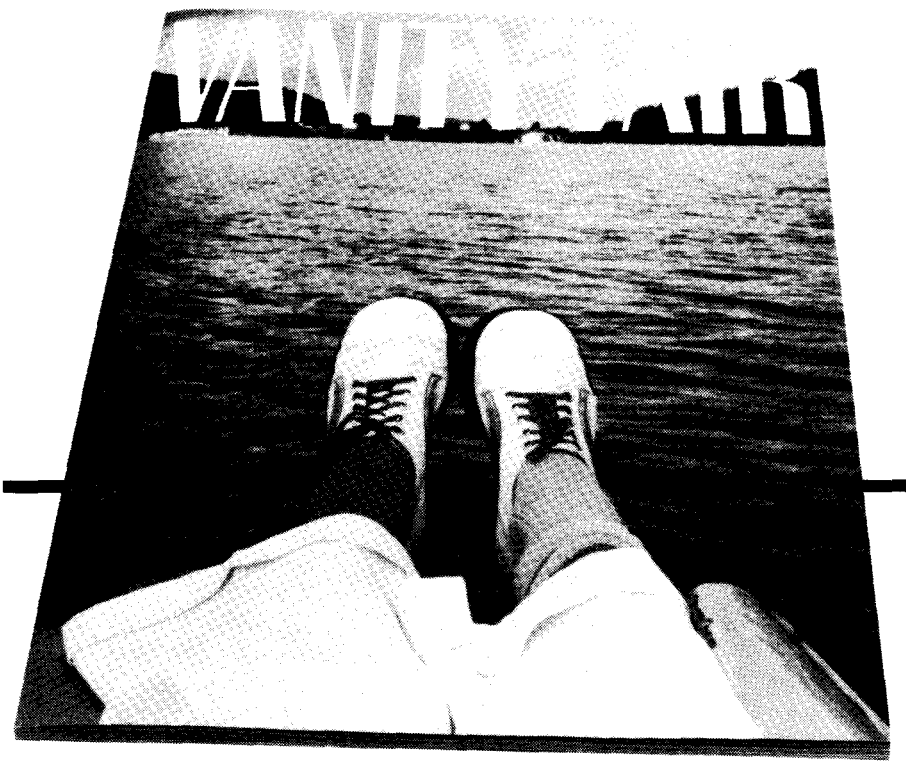

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LETTERS

Saturday Review

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Behold a great man in clown's costume: Mel Brooks. That he isn't even seeking notoriety says it all; he is a true artist.

Marilyn Guinnane
Petaluma, California

Not since teen-age, 40 years ago, have I torn the cover off a magazine and pinned it to my closet door! Exciting guy, great cover, good article, nice, nice man. Thank you.

Betty Koch
Palo Alto, California

May we join the club welcoming *SR* back into our home? One small slap on the wrist for Marc Kristal, though. In his article on Mel Brooks he states, ". . . as a $5,000-per-week writer for Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*. . . ." Anyone who was in the vicinity of that show knows that Sid Caesar was top male banana, Imagene Coca was top female banana, but *Your Show of Shows* was Max Liebman's. It was his package, and he ran it with a very firm, loving hand—rest his beautiful soul. One of the truly lucky ones, I was there.

Ray Drakeley
McAllen, Texas

I feel my views on Barbara Pym were seriously misrepresented by Anna Shapiro in her article on this author in your August issue. Far from being "repelled by the chilliness of Pym's solitaries," I was, in my review of *Excellent Women* and *Quartet in Autumn* (which appeared in *The New Yorker* of February 26, 1979), quite admiring. The first title, I wrote, was "very fine," and the second "even finer—stronger, sadder, funnier, bolder." The sentence Ms. Shapiro quotes as if in rebuke of Barbara Pym—"To be sane is, to a great extent, to be sociable"—in fact belonged to a meditation upon insanity prompted, in part, by the brilliant and alarming portrait of Marcia Ivory's crazy isolation in *Quartet in Autumn*. Elsewhere, my review praised Miss Pym's successful rendering of lives that might seem to some (including, it appears, Ms. Shapiro) too drearily tame; *Excellent Women,* I wrote, "is a startling reminder that solitude may be chosen, and that a lively, full novel can be constructed entirely within the precincts of that regressive virtue, feminine patience."

John Updike
Beverly Farms, Massachusetts

Author Shapiro replies: *You are right, I shouldn't have designated the quotation, "To be sane is, to a great extent, to be sociable" as your verdict on Barbara Pym. However, it was reinforced by the verse that ends that same* New Yorker *piece on Stanislaw Lem and Barbara Pym—"Pym and Lem, / Lem and Pym— / There's little love / In her or him. / Out on a limb / With Pym and Lem / One hugs oneself / Instead of them"—and that can justifiably be called a verdict. In any case aphorisms, by their nature, tend to come across as absolute pronouncements, and it struck me with particular force because of its wide applicability: it is perfectly and completely true.*

I couldn't quote the whole review. I don't think even you quote the best parts, which form a high-water mark in contemporary literary criticism. Editorial space was the determining factor. I am sorry I did not make a happier choice.

In her letter in your August issue, Patricia Goudey of Massachusetts has a lot of fun slinging mud at R.W. Fassbinder. It's hard to say what motivates Ms. Goudey. Maybe she assumes that any film that has bold or sexual content must automatically be bad, or maybe she just isn't ready for a filmmaker as brilliant or modern as Fassbinder. Fassbinder is one of the greatest artists of this century. His best films are masterpieces of composition and are among the best films of the last fifteen years. His death is a terrible tragedy and an incalculable loss. It is as if Ingmar Bergman had died in 1960.

Bennett Bade
Program Director
Denver Film Society
Denver, Colorado

Your May-June issue was the best I've seen from *SR* in many a year. I hope other subscribers, advertisers, and Joe Consumer at the drugstore agreed with me. Keep it up!

Greg Oldham
Portland, Oregon

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Memories of Bucky

Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983)

Once when we were in an American delegation to Moscow for the purpose of exploring issues between the two countries, Bucky Fuller gave a talk on the human future that no one present soon forgot.

One of the Russians had suggested that as a relief from our regular conference sessions, we might stage a debate on what the world would be like in 2000 A.D. Their debater would be Eugene Fyodorov, the famous meteorologist and futurist. Inevitably, for our forensic gladiator we picked Buckminster Fuller, architect, inventor, cosmic chronicler, philosopher, and poet.

I groaned when I learned the ground rules set up by the Russians. Each debater would have fifteen minutes, *precisely*. I had never heard Bucky speak publicly for less than two hours. When the rigid time limit was explained to Bucky, he shrugged, giving us the impression that fifteen-minute talks were a matter of casual routine.

Professor Fyodorov spoke first. Systematically and methodically, he presented a checklist of all the factors that he believed would bear on the world's economy in 2000 A.D. He extrapolated figures with respect to world population, world food supply, world supply of vital resources, etc. I looked around at the Russians as their champion spoke. They were obviously pleased with the coldly scientific and comprehensive nature of the presentation.

After fifteen minutes, give or take ten seconds, Professor Fyodorov completed his talk and sat down. Substantial applause from all present.

Bucky started to speak. Within three minutes, he cast a spell over the entire group. The Russians sat forward in their seats. The world's greatest resources, he said, were to be found in human intelligence, ingenuity, and imagination. He identified the principal problems of the riders on Spaceship Earth and gave the reasons for his belief that these problems were well within human capacity to solve. His earnestness, enthusiasm, creativeness, and knowledge were beautifully blended.

Bucky sailed through the fifteen-minute barrier with the ease and confidence of Roger Bannister going through the four-minute mile. As chairman of the evening session, I started to rise to inform Bucky his time had expired. I felt a restraining hand on my arm. "Please let Mr. Fuller continue," Professor Fyodorov said. "He is magnificent, absolutely magnificent. You must not stop him."

I settled back in my seat. Bucky continued for almost an hour. The Russians were mesmerized. In the midst of the applause following his talk, Professor Fyodorov whispered in my ear: "It was no contest. Mr. Fuller is the winner. Never in my life have I heard anything so wonderful. I am sorry he stopped so soon. Tell me, what did he say?"

The professor was not being sarcastic. Audiences all over the world have had the same experience. They may not have known or understood quite what Bucky was saying, but they felt better for his having said it. He gave people pride in belonging to the human species. He gave them confidence in their innate abilities to overcome the most complex problems. He made them feel at home in the cosmos.

Very early in life he discovered the secret of perpetual curiosity, and he spent the rest of his life trying to give the secret away. Of all his attributes, none was more compelling than his ability to transmit to others his kinship with the universe. His uniqueness as a teacher in this respect was that he saw poetry in everything. He viewed physics, astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences as much through the creative imagination as through equations and formulas. In so doing, he refuted C.P. Snow's notion of the gulf between the "two cultures." He regarded science and the fine arts as extensions of each other, as manifestations of an integrated reality.

The affection of students for Bucky Fuller offered the strongest possible evidence that young people are responsive to the values that give affirmative energy to a society. What they understood through him was that the main end of science is not to answer questions but to generate new ones: not to relieve curiosity but to enlarge it and ignite it. I have known very few people who, after meeting Bucky, did not forever feel a sublime wonder when looking at a starlit sky.

If we read Bucky Fuller solely for information we will obtain information, but we will be cheating ourselves. We should read him for the increased respect he gives us for human potential, and for the lesson that there are no boundaries to the human mind, which he celebrates above all else. The great poets have attempted to describe the human mind and spirit, but I doubt that any of them have done so more provocatively than Bucky. The reason perhaps is that Bucky was not only inspired and nourished by the weightless and all-embracing entity called the human mind, but he had a way of opening our minds to the phenomena within them. In this way, he introduced us to ourselves.

—N.C.

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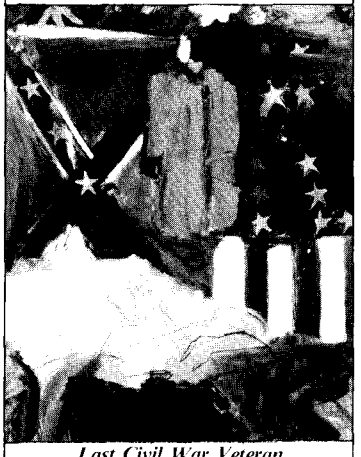
SPOTLIGHTS edited by Mary Beth Llorens

American Masters

American painting has received little international attention and never the support and prestige that European art has commanded at home and abroad. Now, in response to an invitation from the Louvre, a major exhibition of American painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be presented in Paris. Appearing first at the Boston Museum of Art and then at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., it will be the first comprehensive exhibition of American painting of this period to be held in Paris in fifty years. *A New World* includes 110 of the greatest paintings created by American artists. The exhibition represents forty-nine artists and focuses on ten major painters: Copley, Cole, Church, Heade, Lane, Bingham, Mount, Harnett, Homer, and Eakins. Other painters are represented by their greatest single masterpieces. The exhibition is at the Boston Museum of Art from September 7 to November 13 and at the Corcoran Gallery of Art from December 6 to February 12, 1984.



Last Civil War Veteran, **Larry Rivers.**

Another exhibition of American painting to draw national attention is *Painting in the South: 1564-1980.* This will be the first comprehensive exhibition to document the history of painting in the American South. The exhibition comprises approximately 150 works—portraits, landscapes, marine paintings, still lifes, animal paintings, and genre scenes—by men and women who lived in, visited, or were influenced by the South. *Painting in the South* shows at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts from September 14 to November 27 and will travel to New York City, to New Orleans, to Birmingham, Alabama, to Jackson, Mississippi, and to Louisville, Kentucky. □

"Design Since 1945"

The Philadelphia Museum of Art will present the first comprehensive survey in this country of mass-produced, contemporary, decorative art and design. *Design Since 1945* includes approximately 450 objects made for household use, ranging from armchairs to appliances, that reflect changes in consumer taste and lifestyle and in technology. Juxtaposing the work of American and international designers, the exhibition explores the history and evolution of design. The exhibition catalogue uses essays by world-renowned designers and manufacturers to provide a theoretical overview of the concerns of the modern designer. The exhibition runs from October 16 to January 8, 1984. □

"Whisper"

Suzanne Lacy uses performance art to frame the lives and experiences of women. She fights destructive stereotypes of women and shows the reality of their lives as unique and beautiful. In her most recent production, *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*, she presents the lives of elderly women who talk about themselves in an unusual, theatrically arranged setting on the beaches of California. Over 100 mature women, mostly white-haired and all dressed in white, sit around small, white, cloth-covered tables, sipping tea or coffee. The women tell their own stories to an audience that listens from the cliffs above to the amplified voices, which are mixed with the sounds of wind and waves.

Lacy is an artist and activist who is known for large-scale performances and for her teaching and writing on women's art. Most recently, she directed *Freeze Frame: Room for Living Room*, which shows women from diverse racial and economic backgrounds talking about survival while in the ironic setting of a furniture showroom. *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind* will be performed on a beach in La Jolla, California, sometime in October. A half-hour video production will weave together the central visual images from the performance with short interviews with nationally known spokeswomen from senior-citizens advocacy groups, such as the Gray Panthers and the Older Women's League. □

The High Museum of Art

Architect Richard Meier was selected in June 1980 to design the new High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia. Meier has been described as one of the most gifted people on the architectural scene today. He is known for his domestic architecture and several large commissions that include the Bronx Development Center, the Atheneum in New Harmony, Indiana, and the Museum of Decorative Arts in Frankfurt, West Germany. The High Museum already has attracted national attention for its unique design. Meier explains that "the role of the architect is to encourage people to use the museum to experience the art of architecture as well as the art displayed." The exterior of this elegant geometric structure is covered with large, white, porcelain-enamel panels. An atrium interrelates the surrounding galleries and allows light to enter from above. The museum, which will serve as the major center for visual arts in Georgia and the Southeast, opens October 15.

Meier also is designing an addition to the Des Moines Art Center in Iowa that is scheduled for completion in the fall of 1984. □

The Way of How, **a visual opera.**

"The Next Wave"

By whatever name the art is known—avant-garde, experimental, postmodern, new wave—it all will be part of *The Next Wave*, the Brooklyn Academy of Music's first annual festival of new work in the performing arts. The works are significant examples of the current generation's attempt to expand the boundaries of artistic expression. The festival has commissioned large-scale works, mostly of a collaborative nature, from American composers and choreographers and from theater, performance, and visual artists. The festival also presents re-creations of landmark avant-garde collaborations and a program to enhance audience appreciation.

The festival will open with the American premiere of *The Photographer*, with music by Philip Glass and text by Robert Coe. The piece is a theatrical exploration of the life and work of photographer Eadweard Muybridge. The next performance in the series is *The Way of How*, a "visual opera" created by George Coates and an ensemble of artists who work with him to produce intermedia theater. The Trisha Brown Dance Company presents the world premiere of *Set and Reset*, a work by choreographer Brown, visual artist Robert Rauschenberg, and performance artist and composer Laurie Anderson. Also included during the two-month festival are a contemporary gospel-theater piece, *The Gospel at Colonus*, produced in association with the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; a one-night performance by The Art Ensemble of Chicago; choreographer Lucinda Child's *Available Light;* the world premiere of *Hemispheres* by Molissa Fenley and Dancers, in collaboration with composer-pianist Anthony Davis and his ensemble; and performances by choreographers Carolyn Carlson, Rina Schenfeld, and Nina Wiener. The festival runs from October 4 to December 4 and certain works then will tour the country. □

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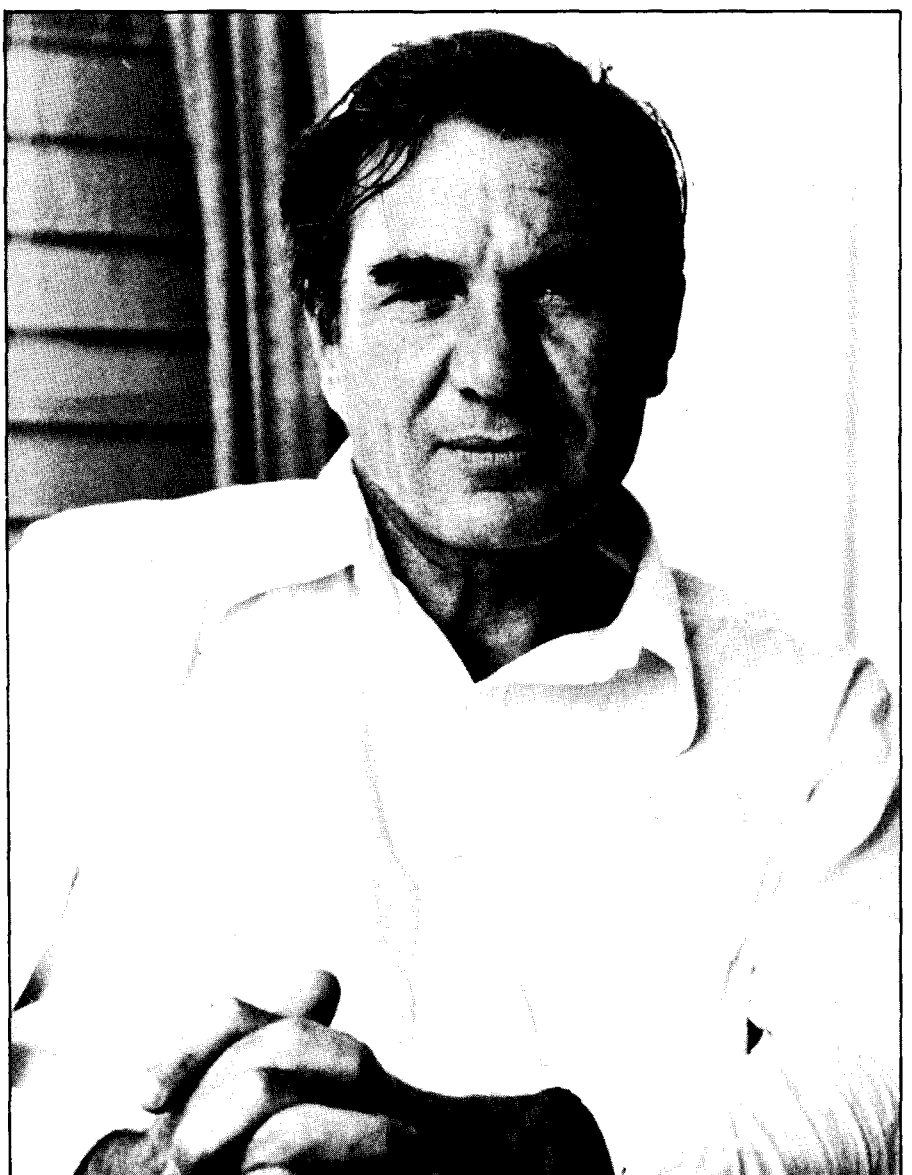
Galway Kinnell Searches for Innocence

In a poetic voice both playful and sensuous, Kinnell uncompromisingly transforms his personal experiences into universal feelings.

BY MADELEINE BECKMAN



ZDENEK KLUZAK

Galway Kinnell, winner of the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

When Galway Kinnell showed his early poem *First Song* to the poet William Carlos Williams in the late 1950s, Williams told the younger poet that he had no business writing poems about "cornstalk violins" because he had never played one, nor should he write about fields in Illinois, where he had never lived. Williams suggested that Kinnell, who was living on New York's Lower East Side, take a pad and pencil and jot down notes about the neighborhood where he lived and walked, and write poems about what he knew best.

Following Williams' advice, Kinnell absorbed his neighborhood, specifically Avenue C between 14th Street and Houston Street. What emerged was a long, Whitmanesque, fourteen-part poem, *The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ Into the New World.* For Kinnell the poem was a breakthrough. Now, more than twenty years later, Kinnell has published eight volumes of poetry, one novel, four translations, and has been anthologized with the world's greatest poets.

Among the awards Kinnell has received are a grant from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1962, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1963, the Brandeis Creative Arts Award in 1969, the Shelly Memorial Award in 1973, the Award of Merit Medal for Poetry in 1975, the Herald Morton Landon Award for translation of poetry in 1979, the American Book

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Award (co-winner with Charles Wright) in April 1983, and most recently the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for his book *Selected Poems*.

In his acceptance speech for the Award of Merit, Kinnell said: "We know from the briefest glance at the past that poets who are honored in their time are often forgotten soon thereafter, that poets ignored while they live often come to great honor later on. I needed to remind myself of this principle frequently during that period of my life—a long time, it seemed—when hardly anyone noticed my poetry. Now that I stand on this stage today I would just as soon forget it. But it's too late! I've learned it too well."

Kinnell is not quite sure why he won the Pulitzer. "I don't even know who the judges were," he says. "I meant to ask why they gave it to me, but I forgot." Kinnell does not think that his work will change because of the prize; he does, however, believe that his life will be made a little easier: he will give fewer readings for more pay.

Although the Pulitzer has created publicity for the poet, the prize has had little effect on his attitude toward himself. "I've seen many prizes come and go and I haven't paid too much attention to them," he says. He is pleased with having won the prize, but has not taken it as seriously as many people think he should. "The thing that did affect me about the poetry prize was the great outpouring of letters, telegrams, and telephone calls from all over the country. People I've known at some stage in my life, but also many people I don't know at all . . . what one correspondent called 'all your unmet friends.' So that wave of affection that did come through all those messages did affect me."

Kinnell was born in 1927 in Providence, Rhode Island, and grew up in the small milltown of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. At 15 he moved from Pawtucket to attend Wilbraham Academy. In 1948 he graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University with a bachelor's degree. A year later he earned a master's from Rochester University.

Today Kinnell divides his time between New York City, where he is director of NYU's creative writing program, and Sheffield, Vermont, where he and his wife Inez and their children Maud, 16, and Fergus, 14, have a home. (The children's names were taken from W.B. Yeats, who Kinnell says has had the most influence on his work, along with Rainer Marie Rilke.)

Kinnell at 56 is a burly man who has deep-set eyes that seem protected by his bushy eyebrows. He carries a bit of the New England countryside with him, even in Manhattan. His muscular physique gives him the appearance of a manual laborer, but his white shirt and khaki trousers confirm his academic attachment.

Kinnell likes living in New York City. "In New York I never feel separated from the anxiousness of the present moment," he says. "It's one reason why I want to live here. I don't know how permanently, but that's where I want to live for the moment. One of the reasons is that one is completely in touch with what is most difficult in human life, which is loneliness and poverty combined. Failed struggle—the sense of the whole class of crushed people, crushed individuals—is impossible not to meet every day. Living in New York keeps me in a state of anxious connection."

If Kinnell is striving to be a part of the world, to feel and interact, to be involved in relationships and to affirm his connectedness with the animal kingdom, he has achieved this goal in his poetry and in his social contributions as a teacher and political activist. In *Babel to Byzantium* the poet and novelist James Dickey wrote, "Galway Kinnell cares about everything." Not only does Kinnell have a passion *for* and devotion *to* poetry, he extends these same feelings to his friends and students, to political issues, and to the natural world around him.

In 1963 Kinnell worked as a laborer for CORE (Congress for Racial Equality) in Hammond, Louisiana; in the late Sixties he was active in poetry readings protesting the Vietnam War; in 1982 he organized a protest against nuclear arms called "Poetry Against the End of the World"; and in 1982 he was among the poets reading in "An Evening to Support Humanitarian Relief for the Children of Lebanon." "I think that Galway feels a poet is not just a private human being," says poet and colleague Jane Cooper, "but that a poet has public responsibilities."

When Kinnell writes a poem, he does not mean to make it political, but the relationships he observes *are* political. In the poem *Vapor Trail Reflected in the Frog Pond*, the narrator, a Vietnamese villager, hears "America singing," the song being the crackling of rifles mixed with a bomber plane's drone:

The old watch: their
thick eyes
puff and foreclose by the moon. The young,
heads
trailed by the beginnings of necks,
shiver,
in the guarantee they shall be bodies.

In the frog pond
the vapor trail of a SAC bomber creeps,

I hear its drone, drifting, high up
in immaculate ozone.

The poem deals with "the sacred character of human life," Kinnell says. He believes that a sacred force exists that exemplifies itself in everything, and that this force sometimes shows itself in destruction. "When one animal eats another, that definitely has to do with the interchange of life, the dependency of one living creature on another," he says. "I think the problem with us today is that we have gone crazy. Human destruction is of a different order from every other form of destruction ever known on earth, because it's an act of madness. . . . The original and continuing function of poetry has been to counteract technological madness and to reconcile the human being once again with existence."

Listening to him talk about nuclear war, society, and his poetry, one must remember that despite his awards and position, Kinnell finds it difficult to identify with all the "hoopla" about himself. The floor of his cubbyhole office is strewn with publications: *Science 82, American Poetry Review*. A rolled-up mattress lies in the corner on the floor next to a coat-tree. On the windowsill sits an empty plastic soda bottle with a bouquet of dead flowers, gathering dust. Next to the window hang a small watercolor landscape, with the $8.75 price tag still on the frame, and a black-and-white photograph of Kinnell playing with Maud and Fergus as young children. A Junior Delux portable typewriter, circa 1935, looking too small for his hands, sits on his desk practically hidden beneath piles of papers and letters. "This office is the

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state of my mind," says Kinnell, standing amid the mess.

His office is not the only indication of his battle with disorganization; his writing habits are haphazard as well. Kinnell writes at random intervals because his life is random. "If I had a patron to support me I'd have regular writing habits." Usually he writes his poems with a pen on scraps of paper. "If they're written on napkins and I find some shredded pulp in my pocket, I know that that one is not going to materialize into a poem," he says impishly. Kinnell writes when he can—on trains, at bus depots—carrying with him his portable typewriter.

It is hard to believe that the poem *The Bear* was written either on a train or in a bus depot. This work has been analyzed and criticized more than any other of Kinnell's poems. The ninety-four-line poem, divided into seven parts, is modeled after an Eskimo method of catching bears. In the poem the narrator pleads with the natural world for absolution of man's transgression—that of killing the bear for warmth and food. In the second stanza, the process of killing the bear begins:

I take a wolf's rib and whittle
it sharp at both ends
and coil it up
and freeze it in blubber and place it out
on the fairway of the bears.

The last stanza brings the metaphor of the bear closer to Kinnell's own life:

. . . the rest of my days I spend
wandering: wondering
what, anyway,
was that sticky infusion, that rank flavor of
blood, that poetry, by which I lived?

Kinnell says the poem is a metaphor for his writing process. Hearing him recite *The Bear*, one feels as if in the presence of a shaman who moves without his own control into a deeper place not quite earthbound. Watching Kinnell recite this poem, the listener can be distracted by the intensity of the performance. In an interview in 1975, Kinnell said that once when he announced the title at a reading, a rustle went through the auditorium and he felt as if he could have paused, nodded, and gone on to the next poem without anyone's noticing, because they all knew the poem.

Kinnell memorizes poetry, both his and others', because he believes that a poem does not really enter the reader until he memorizes it. At a recent memorial reading of the work of James Wright, Kinnell was the only guest poet to recite from memory. At another reading he recited his fourteen-part *The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ* without missing a beat or stumbling on a word. He thinks that he is probably the only poet ever to fall asleep during his own reading. In an interview he said, "I just folded my arms on the lectern and fell asleep. I suppose the audience thought I had fallen into a poetic swoon!"

Kinnell believes that a poem does not really enter the reader until he memorizes it.

Kinnell does not take critics seriously. One poem that they have frequently misinterpreted is *Under the Maud Moon* from the *Book of Nightmares*. In a 1976 interview with Kinnell, the interviewer interpreted the poem as either Kinnell's admission of defeat or his commitment to tragedy. Kinnell explained that the opposite was true: what he had meant to convey was his hope that when his daughter came upon hard hours in her life she could turn to the poem for help. The poem combines a man's feelings about birth and a father's adoration of his new daughter. Kinnell achieves a universal feeling by writing about his personal experience.

In the poem's fourth part, Kinnell talks about the daughter who is about to be born:

It is all over,
little one, the flipping
and overleaping, the watery
somersaulting alone in the oneness
under the hill, under
the old, lonely bellybutton. . . .

In Part VII he recalls how he used to go to her room at night to comfort her:

I used to come to you
and sit by you
and sing to you. You did not know,
and yet you will remember,
in the silent zones
of the brain, a specter, descendant. . . .

The last stanza of the poem is Kinnell's obvious wish that his daughter will continue to be comforted by her father even after he is gone:

. . . may there come back to you
a voice,
spectral, calling you
sister!
from everything that dies.
And then
you shall open
this book, even if it is the book of nightmares.

Whatever Kinnell writes about, whether it is bomber planes or lovemaking, his voice and the sensuousness of his poems are uncompromising. A recent poem, *Blackberry Eating*, is simple, direct, and less metaphorical than most of his poems:

I love to go out in late September
among fat, overripe, icy blackberries
to eat blackberries for breakfast,
the stalks very prickly, a penalty
they earn for knowing the black art
of blackberry-making; and as I stand among
them
lifting the stalks to my mouth, the ripest berries
fall almost unbidden to my tongue,
as words sometimes do, certain peculiar words
like *strengths* or *squinched*
many-lettered, one-syllabled lumps,
which I squeeze, squinch open, and
splurge well
in the silent, startled, icy, black language
of blackberry-eating in late September. . . .

The voice in *Blackberry Eating* is playful and sensuous, combining the child and the man. It strives for an innocence that Kinnell realizes he cannot attain, because "being truly innocent is knowing everything."

For Kinnell, innocence has nothing to do with age. He says he does not feel his 56 years, though he will not deny that thoughts of "moving deathward" are with him. "There's a certain sense that when one is young you'll have time to accomplish everything in your life that you want to accomplish," he says. "But then when you get older, you have feelings you'll cease to be before 'your pen has gleaned your teeming brain.' It's true that Keats said that line when in his twenties; that was because of a premonition of a shortness of his life. But I think anybody in their late fifties is bound to feel the way I do. There are bound to be things I will not be able to get done. I guess that's better than running out of things to do." ■

Madeleine Beckman is a freelance writer living in New York City.

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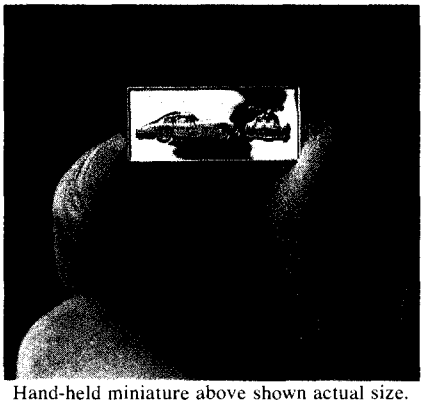

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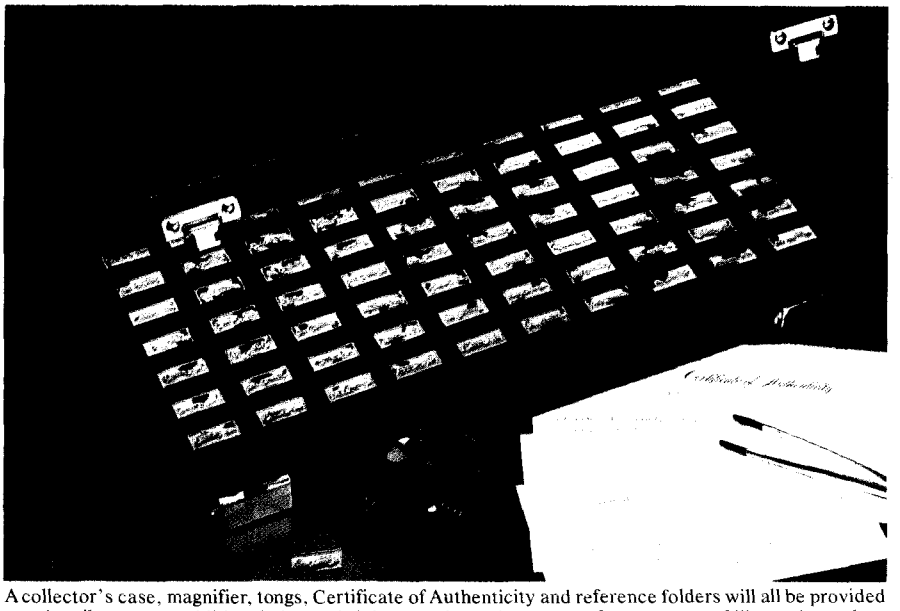

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Ray Carver: Keeping It Short

Given his recent honors and the publication of his third book of short stories, Ray Carver is reaping large rewards from short fiction.

BY KAY BONETTI

Raymond Carver has acquired a large audience and a distinguished reputation on the basis of two volumes of short stories: Will You Please Be Quiet Please? *(McGraw Hill, 1976; nominated for the 1977 National Book Award) and* What We Talk About When We Talk About Love *(Alfred A. Knopf, 1981). A third collection,* Cathedral, *comes out this fall [see review on page 61] and includes Carver's story "A Small Good Thing," which received first place in the* 1983 O. Henry Prize Stories Collection. *He is also the author of several volumes of poetry.*

Carver's stories reflect his upbringing as the child of a small-town sawmill laborer in the Pacific Northwest. They are peopled with blue-collar families, Indians, unemployed (often alcoholic) aerospace engineers—generally persons without the spiritual, emotional, or intellectual tools to express their plight. The force of Carver's two earlier works lies in what is implied; the stories in Cathedral *are fuller and more reflective.*

The following is an interview conducted in New York City during the annual meeting of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. There Carver received the Mildred and Harold Strauss Living Award, which grants him a substantial, tax-free annual income for five years.

Ray Carver.

SR *This has been a big year for you, hasn't it?*

CARVER It has indeed. Many things have happened—both good and bad—and there are many blessings to count, and I certainly do count them. Especially if you're referring to the attention that's been paid of late to my work. This most recent award is certainly very significant. Cynthia Ozick and I were the first recipients. The closest thing around might be the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Awards. This might be better in the sense that this is renewable after five years. It's just a great, wonderful opportunity. My favorite TV show in the 1950s was *The Millionaire,* where once a week somebody would come around and deliver a check. This, to a degree, is what has happened in my case. I'm very happy with the award and I'm mindful of the great responsibility.

SR *What are the conditions of this award?*

CARVER The only condition is that I not have another form of employment, like teaching for instance. On the day that I received notification of the award I was on leave of absence from my teaching duties at Syracuse University. And I called up my chairman, who's a very kind, decent, intelligent, and thoughtful man, and told him that I would not be coming back after the end of the semester. They were very happy for me, of course. And sorry to see me go because the writing program had just gotten into place up there.

SR *You mentioned that some very sad things have happened this last year. Is there anything you can talk about?*

CARVER I lost my friend John Gardner. I lost another friend, Dick Hugo, who died in October. I just had news, when we were at Syracuse, right before I came to New York, that a friend and colleague up there is gravely ill and doesn't have much longer to live. My daughter was in an auto accident last fall with her baby. She and the baby are fine now, I'm happy to say, but it was a difficult situation for a time. So it's been a strange period here, these last twelve or fifteen months.

SR *Do you think it has anything to do with being in your forties?*

CARVER No, I don't [chuckling]. My thirties were a difficult time for me. My thirties almost killed me, and I was very glad to celebrate my fortieth birthday. No, I think it's just that when we get into our forties, we're going to have to expect to bury some of our friends. There's only one alternative to that, of course—friends will bury us.

SR *But you're finally reaping the rewards of all that hard work of previous years.*

CARVER Oh, it would seem that way. I never looked on my writing, frankly, as a career pursuit. I just set out to write stories and poems. I feel healthier and stronger and better suited for whatever I have to do than I ever have before. All of this certainly has to do with the fact that for

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many years, most of my thirties, until my thirty-ninth year, I was a practicing alcoholic, and that took a lot of time and energy. I laid waste a good many things in those years. Since I stopped drinking six years ago it seems to have gotten immeasurably better—there's no question of that.

SR *There have been books written about the subject of writers and alcohol. Do you think there was any relationship between what you do and the fact that you drank too much?*

CARVER No, I think alcoholism is probably no higher amongst writers or artists of any sort than it is amongst people of any other professional group, be they lawyers or doctors or ophthalmologists. There's a myth that goes along with writing and alcohol. But purely and simply, drinking is *not* conducive to artistic production. Quite the contrary, I think it's a disaster and a terrible hindrance. Writers are more visible than the other people, that's all. We hear about John Berryman's problems with alcohol or F. Scott Fitzgerald or William Faulkner or Ernest Hemingway or Malcolm Lowry. But in *any* group of professional people you find a lot of trouble with alcohol.

SR *Was there anything in particular that made you make that decision to stop drinking?*

CARVER Well, in a way it was made for me. In 1976, the last year of my drinking, two of my books were published: *Will You Please Be Quiet Please?* and a book of poems, *At Night the Salmon Move.* But my life seemed to have gotten completely away from me. It was out of control, and I was hospitalized twice in a space of about twelve months, which is some indication of how serious the problem was. Finally, after the fourth hospitalization, it occurred to me that I was not going to be able to drink socially any longer. So I stopped. I just didn't drink one morning. And I didn't drink the next morning, and the next morning. Fortunately I was able to get a week of sobriety and a second week, and then, lo and behold, I'd been sober a month, and I just took things very carefully. As they say in AA, "One day at a time."

SR *Tell me about* Cathedral.

CARVER There's an opening-up in this book that there's not been in any of the other books. There was a period of several months when I didn't write anything. And then the first story that I wrote was "Cathedral," which is unlike anything I have ever done before. All the stories in this book are fuller and more interesting, somehow. They are more generous. They're not quite so pared down. I went as far in the other direction as I wanted to go. My life's changed to a degree since I started giving my work to a woman in Syracuse who has a word processor. She is able to type up the story and give me the fair copy, and I can mark it up and change it to my heart's content and give it back to her, and a few hours later I can have fair copy back again. I've never been able to work that way before, and I'm sure that that accounts to a degree for the fact that I was able to do, for me, so many stories in a fairly short period of time. But the rewriting and revising is something very dear to my heart and something close to the hearts of many writers of my acquaintance. Looking at the first drafts of great writers is very heartening and very instructive because there are so many changes. Tolstoy made so many changes in his proof that quite often the entire material would have to be set again, because he was revising right down to the time of publication. John Gardner worked that way. Any number of writers. I'm never quite finished with the work.

SR *Do most of your stories have a discernible germination point?*

CARVER Most often they come from a spoken line. I have not written the story for it yet, but I heard someone say not too long ago, "He was so sick before he died." And that set up a whole conjuring of feeling in me because I have known people that this would fit. I haven't written that story, but I will. And there's the story "A Serious Talk." That story had its genesis in a single line: "That's the last holiday you'll ever ruin for us." That line is in the story, somewhere. We all have had or seen holidays ruined in some way or another, through a family altercation or something. Once I was riding on a plane and I saw, as we were coming down, the man sitting next to me take the wedding ring off his finger and put it into his pocket. All I had to do was to imagine what might be happening there, what might be going through his mind, or what he was up to, to give me the idea for a story. I don't go around with stories in my head all the time. But when I sit down to work, something's on my mind and I usually don't waste much time. I go right to it. There's that sense of excitement when you're working on something and you know that you've got a keeper. You know that this is something different, something special. It happened when I wrote the story called "Where I'm Calling From" that was in *The New Yorker* last summer. I was informed it's going to be in *The Best American Short Stories 1983,* coming out this fall. Somewhere in the midst of writing that story, at about the fifth or the sixth draft, I had this same rush, this same feeling of excitement, that this is different, this is good, this is what makes us come back and do this work over and over again.

SR *Is it a coming-together of form and content?*

CARVER I think it is. It's that and it's a coming-together of everything. You're asking me now to describe the sensation of the creative process, and I'm not sure I'm up to that. I can just tell you that it is an aesthetic and intellectual and emotional feeling of fitness, of "everything is right here." I'm sure that musicians must feel this when they're writing music or maybe when they're performing. And certainly writers have to feel it, but not always. I wish it *were* there always, but it's there just enough that it keeps us coming back.

SR *You have said that a writer has to have more than talent: that he has to be able to render a world according to himself. You mentioned Cheever, Updike, Salinger, Singer, Elkin, Beattie, Ozick, and Barthelme.*

CARVER Yes, and many more besides. Their stories are *their* stories and no one else's. They have their signature on them. I could pick up a story by John Cheever or by Stanley Elkin or by Mary Robinson, and, having never read the story before, I would know who had written it. It's just like looking at a landscape by Cézanne or Renoir. We may never have seen that painting before, but looking at it we'd know whose work it is. And I like that.

SR *What's talent?*

CARVER Well, talent is something that any writer has. Every aspirant writer, musician, painter—I would say nearly every one of them has talent. But talent is simply not enough.

SR *Are there any writers you could name who are, say, safely dead, who had talent but that just never quite*

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got there?

CARVER No, at the moment I can't. But most of the dead writers are writers who had it together, or we wouldn't be talking about them. Like Joyce in *Dubliners* and Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor and Isaac Babel, and Chekhov of course. Chekhov comes first to my mind. I've never met a writer who didn't love Chekhov.

SR *You have also said that you'd like to write on a three-by-five card, which would hang over your desk, what Geoffrey Wolff once said: "No Cheap Tricks." What's an example of trickery in writing?*

CARVER Oh, I suppose I'm thinking of characters whom the author finds contemptible or has no interest in whatsoever—sticking these characters into ridiculous situations. I read a story in manuscript not so long ago in which the central figure wakes up one morning and decides he wants to change his life. So he takes his baby out of the cradle and puts the baby into the furnace downstairs, and then he proceeds to go down the street and flirt with a neighbor and so forth. It's a story that doesn't make any sense, it has no reason for being. Is the author trying to make a point? It's a story in which the author has no investment whatsoever. There's no value system at work, no moral grounding, if you will. Some stories start at a point and they don't go anywhere. The author is telling you to take it or leave it. It's self-expression run rampant. I mean, in my view art is a linking between people, the creator and the consumer. Art is *not* self-expression, it is communication, and I am interested in communication. But I'm not trying to make a case against experimental fiction. Donald Barthelme's fiction is experimental and he's quite a wonderful writer. He writes like nobody else.

SR *But your point would be that there are other writers who then set out to write like that—*

CARVER And try to write like Donald Barthelme, and they don't have Donald Barthelme's particular and peculiar genius. They take the surfacy things in Barthelme and they make a mess of them. It's not *their* vision that they're working with, it's Donald Barthelme's.

SR *Nobody talks about the humor in your stories.*

CARVER I'm glad you brought it up, because I feel that there is plenty of humor in them. There was a good long review of *Will You Please Be Quiet Please?* in *Newsweek* when the book first appeared. And the reviewer did talk about the humor in the stories, and I was very glad to see that, because I think that there *is* humor in the stories—a little black humor maybe, but humor.

SR *Do you have a working routine, a way you work?*

CARVER When I'm working on a story I work on it night and day. Sometimes I don't even know what day of the week it is. And when I'm not working, I fall into bad habits: stay up late, watch TV, sleep-in too late in the mornings. I suppose I work in fits and starts.

> *"Art is not self-expression . . ."*

SR *What is the relationship in your mind between your poems and your stories?*

CARVER It's certainly a good question. I don't know if I have an appropriate response for it. I feel close to my poems. I'm *always* flattered when somebody comes up to me and tells me that they read a poem of mine and liked it. But I made a conscious decision some years ago that I was going to have to give my real attention and my most serious energy to my fiction, and that's what I've done.

SR *I notice that in your poems you tend to write about experiences, people that you have known. The speaker in the poems appears to be you.*

CARVER Yes, I suppose so. In that regard, I suppose the poetry can be much more personal than the fiction.

SR *Were you going to learn to be a writer in school?*

CARVER Oh, indeed. I met John Gardner early on at Chico State College when I was 19 or 20, and he was someone I admired a great deal. He was a graduate of the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop. When I left Chico State and went to Humboldt State over in northern California, I met Dick Day, and he was a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He said, "If you want to be a writer, hang out with other writers and learn to write. Go to Iowa." He was instrumental in helping me go to Iowa.

SR *What was your first real "break"?*

CARVER I suppose a real turning point in my life happened in 1967, when one of my short stories was picked up from an obscure literary magazine and reprinted in *The Best American Short Stories,* edited by Martha Foley.

SR *And that was?*

CARVER And that was "Will You Please Be Quiet Please?"—the title story of the collection. It was the most momentous thing in regard to my writing that had ever happened to me.

SR *You've made it in a business where it's very difficult to do that with the short form. You have gained a huge reputation on the basis of two collections of short stories. When people speak of Raymond Carver they almost always speak of* Will You Please Be Quiet Please? *and* What We Talk About When We Talk About Love. *Are you conscious of that being very fortunate for you?*

CARVER It doesn't happen very often with any writer who writes two novels, or certainly two books of short stories. I've become aware of that fact. I'm happy that it's happened, sure.

SR *Have you had a relationship with an agent or publisher that brought these things together?*

CARVER Though I say there was a turning point in 1967, there was another turning point in the early 1970s when an editor at *Esquire* began publishing my stories in *Esquire* magazine. That's when the stories first began attracting some attention.

SR *Gordon Lish?*

CARVER Yes. There's no question but that he's been an important individual in my life. I still have Gordon as my editor at Knopf, and I'm happy about that. And I happen to have a very good agent whom I'm very happy with. She's somebody I feel very close to and compatible with. I don't know what else to say except that everything is coming together now, at the right time in my life. All of these things would not have been right perhaps six or eight years ago, but everything now is right, and I thank my lucky stars for that. ■

Kay Bonetti is project director of the American Audio Prose Library, which is funded by the Missouri Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and KOPN Radio in Columbia, Missouri.

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Memo to a Forger

Faking a masterpiece is nearly impossible these days, but if a forger does his homework and finds the right buyer, he can still make a great deal of money.

BY MERYLE SECREST

If you are thinking of painting a fake blue-period Picasso, don't bother. Although a few people are floating fake Picassos on the market now, none of the forgeries are new, and for good reason. These days, no one in his right mind will chance a million on such a painting without more gilt-edged assurances than any con artist, no matter how ingenious, could provide.

However, if you are a man of lesser ambition, content with relatively modest ill-gotten gains, opportunity still beckons in that most chancy of all worlds, the art market. The winds of fortune are bound to blow in the direction of some hitherto neglected artist whose oeuvre contains some wonderful gaps, whose canvases tend to be small (small fakes are easier to pass off than large ones), and whose works are now selling for between $10,000 and $100,000, which is enough to make a fake worthwhile but not enough to make people suspicious. He's a natural.

The potential client is characterized with typical succinctness by Thomas P. Hoving, a former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "The confidence game, which is part of the forger's game, is based on crawling greed." In many other markets a bargain is a bargain, but in the art world few seem to know that a bargain is such because the work either has been stolen or is a fake. So, at a knocked-down price, they buy their lost Utrillo, their unknown Modigliani, their black-period Stella, their rare Rodin, or their *petit bijou* of a Renoir. Perhaps they even are confident enough to donate this treasure to their favorite museum one day, expecting to take a really munificent tax deduction. Some observers claim that such apparent naiveness conceals a clever business attempt to fool the IRS and that the client knows all along what he is buying. Others see such clients as sad but foolish adventurers in a caveat emptor world, undone by their weakness for a bargain.

No one may ever know what the motives of such big spenders are, but such speculations need not disturb the forger's brow. He sees his place and he fills it. After all, he is part of a historical fraternity extending far back to the first faltering vision of art as commodity, when the Roman demand for things Greek had political as well as cultural significance. Painters as diverse as Albrecht Dürer and Claude Lorrain have been bedeviled by forgers, and the problem has been made even more vexing by the readiness of some artists to see their work purely in terms of hard cash. In a widely quoted letter, Peter Paul Rubens said to a client in 1618, "As this reproduction is not yet quite completed, I am going to retouch it throughout myself. So it can pass for an original if necessary."

Not only did famous painters imitate themselves, but whole generations of minor artists copied masterpieces either for pleasure or as their profession. Some devoted their lives to reproducing certain masterpieces like the Mona Lisa—one copyist claimed to have made a thousand copies—and a legend persists that the Mona Lisa in the Louvre is not the real one because it once was stolen by an adroit gang of copyists. One has to be very astute indeed to spot a fake that is centuries old, although one extremely well-known and respected New York art dealer, Klaus Perls, claims that he was taught to date such copies to the decade—a formidable feat, if true.

We are not discussing the attribution of a workshop painting, by students of such a master as Rubens or Titian, which may or may not contain traces of the wizard's own hand; that question delights wave upon wave of new scholars, but almost no one else. And we are not discussing the work of the honest admirer, say of Jackson Pollock or Picasso, who imitates without intent to deceive. At issue is the business of forging, and although there are novices at this as in every other game, there are a number of ferociously clever exponents.

The intelligent forger will, for instance, avoid a Great Master. As already indicated, the stakes are too high for comfort, and even the cleverest find the technical problems daunting. A famous nineteenth-century Italian forger, C.F. Ioni, got away with it only because technical testing was far less sophisticated and rigorous than today. Han Van Meegeren, a Dutch virtuoso painter who successfully floated a number of "Vermeers" before being brought to justice just after World War II, studied for decades to imitate the style and techniques of the Dutch seventeenth-

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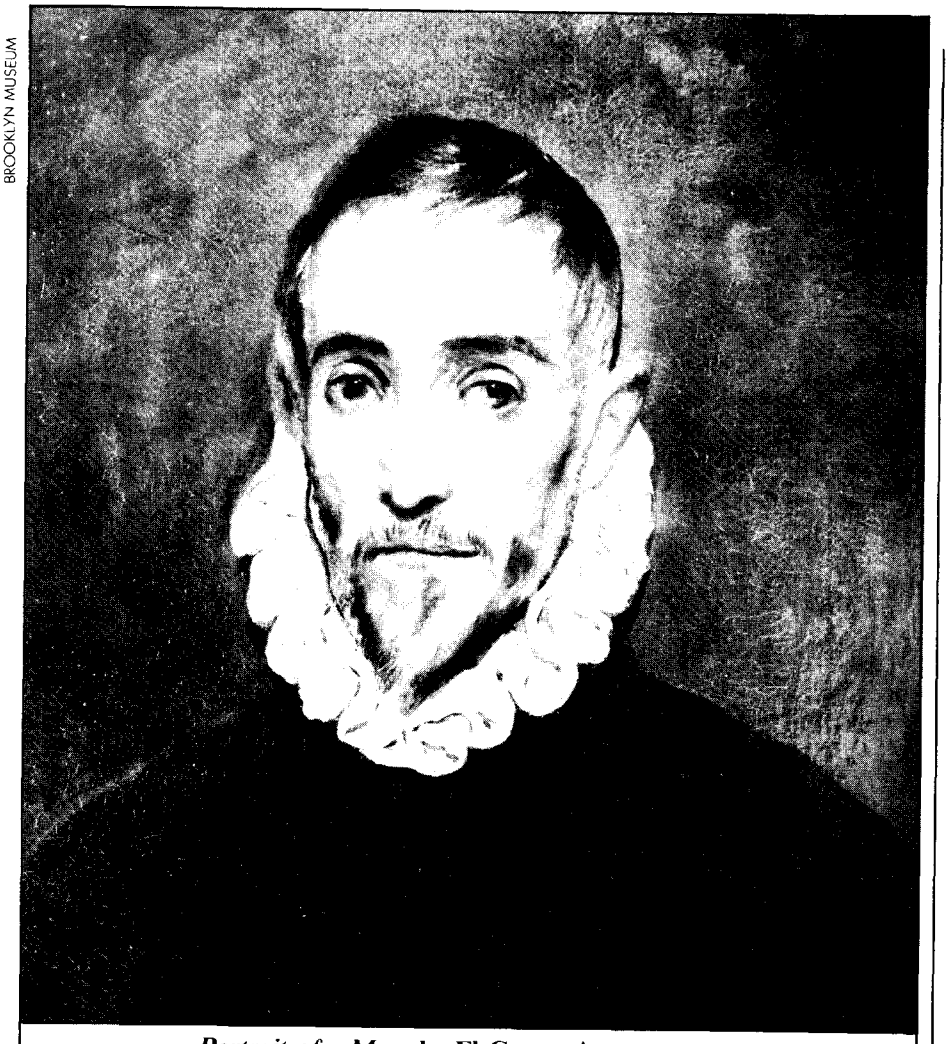
BROOKLYN MUSEUM



Portrait of a Man, **by El Greco. An exact copy was found in the basement of the Brooklyn Museum.**

century master, even inventing a medium that dried rapidly enough to make the painting look 300 years old. He studied old books to discover the correct pigments and reportedly paid as much as $2,000 a shipment for real lapis lazuli from London; he manufactured his own white and used cochineal to produce red. Even so, he was caught: X-rays eventually established that Van Meegeren had used a white lead paint to model his forms that never was employed by Vermeer.

Even if he avoids such obvious giveaways and restricts himself to works of the last hundred years, for which he can duplicate the pigments and materials with a little care, the clever forger still needs to be something of a scholar. Gone are the days, as in the case of the nineteenth-century Italian forger Alceo Dossena, when a phenomenally gifted artist could suggest any historical style in sculpture from antiquity to the Renaissance and be believed. Buyers are less credulous nowadays. They want plausibility, and the sophisticated forger has to be able to give it to them. He has studied his artist. He knows what the gaps are, stylistically and chronologically. For instance, after Jackson Pollock went to Venice for the Biennale a new school sprang up, composed of north Italian and south German artists who leaped at the opportunity to "discover" Pollocks that the master had painted while there. At least one of these looked good enough to be used on the cover of a book published in Europe. This painting has since been proved a fake, and its provenance, "Cardozzo Collection, Venice," is untraceable.

Catalogues raisonnés—the complete description of an artist's work—complicate a forger's life, and there too he needs to be in the know. He will know that Claude Lorrain's *Liber Veritas (Book of Truth)*, containing sketches of all of the French landscapist's works together with notes on the location of each item, is incomplete; so is the only reliable guide to Renoir, *Tableaux, Pastels et Dessins de Pierre Auguste Renoir*, published in Paris by Ambroise Vollard in 1918, although the great Renoir scholar Francois Doulte is closing that gap. He will know that catalogues raisonnés of Modigliani and Van Gogh are highly unreliable, but that a new one on Utrillo by Paul Petrides has stopped the forgers in their tracks. He also will know which markets to avoid. The drawings of Dali are notoriously unreliable as investments. Rodin drawings are almost without value, since the sculptor was so imitated during his lifetime that nine out of ten now appearing are fakes.

The sophisticated forger will study the little circumstances of his master's life that have not made biographical accounts. Before Petrides' book, for instance, a number of forgers capitalized on the knowledge that Utrillo's mother and her boyfriend cooked up a number of fakes, which actually are valuable themselves; the pair attributed these to the proper period, since only a rank amateur would have bought a Utrillo from his late, alcohol-sodden days. He will know that something of the sort happened to the drawings of Fernand Léger after the death of that artist. He also will know that despite a much-admired catalogue raisonné, Picasso's oeuvre is not altogether established, because this painter was as likely to call one of his imitator's works *"le vrai"* as one of his own *"faux"* if the mood took him. On that score, Perls tells a charming story about the quintessential maker of mobiles, Alexander Calder. "Is this your work?" the art dealer inquired, gesturing toward a plausible but inferior mobile that was for sale. Calder shrugged. "I could have done it," he said. Perls replied disapprovingly, "But look at the way this is constructed!" Calder: "Oh, I never would have made anything like that."

Our clever forger will know one of the cardinal rules of the game. Perls tells of seeing a number of paintings by Modigliani over a four- or five-year period and reflecting that the artist painted some very weak works. Then he went to an exhibition of Modigliani's work and saw the same paintings in a group, and the light dawned: "These pictures were all painted by the same person, but this

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person was not Modigliani." At all costs, the forger must keep his fakes widely separated, so that the trained eye will not discern a family resemblance; he also must keep them from hanging side by side with the real thing to avoid comparison. Many a forger working with a dealer has floated his work outside the main markets of Paris, London, and New York to avoid specialists who can hamper his ambitions. The ways in which a forgery can find its way from a minor market to a major, gaining respectability with each jump, are as ingenious as are the imaginations that attack the problem. Similarly, the forger knows that context is all. A fake Winslow Homer in the back room of a junk shop is not going to look half as authentic as the same painting in a ritzy store window or, better yet, on the wall of a well-heeled collector's apartment. So the background should be good. It should not be too good. When the National Gallery in Ottawa, Canada, exhibited a collection owned by Walter P. Chrysler Jr. that included a staggering number of fakes, some critics realized that these were not minor works by major hands, as previously thought, but imitations to their cores.

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ART RESEARCH

Top: *Plantation Road* by Thomas Hart Benton.
Bottom: A forged variation.

A good forger will know when to make a copy, when to make a pastiche, and when, as did Van Meegeren, to invent a new composition "in the manner of" the master. These last are the most successful, but not surprisingly the rarest, since they require the greatest amount of native talent and imagination. There are a whole host of lesser laborers in the related genre of the pastiche, as in the case of a Maurice Prendergast watercolor recently pronounced a fake by the International Foundation for Art Research; the watercolor had been manufactured, magpie fashion, from bits and pieces of other, widely scattered Prendergast works. Such a pastiche naturally looks patchy and, once a scholar is let loose, disintegrates before everyone's eyes, but it can fool the average buyer or even the average art dealer not a specialist in Prendergast. The IFAR recently has collected six Thomas Hart Benton watercolors, some of them minor variations of known works and all fakes. At least one is a pastiche demonstrating the forger's lack of an intelligent understanding of Benton's works.

Copies? Well, it depends. Leo Castelli, the famous New York dealer in modern art, tells of being contacted by a dealer from out of state who had located a black-period Frank Stella in America. It soon was determined that the work had to be one that Castelli himself had sold to a Milanese doctor in 1959 for $1,200. Castelli, known for his meticulous records, traced the original owner and established that the Stella was still hanging on the same wall in Milan and therefore could not be anywhere else. (As could be expected, the fake had been copied from a book, which is another dead giveaway, color reproduction being what it is nowadays.) The story therefore has a sad ending for the forger, but a happy ending for Castelli, who informed the Milanese doctor that the value of his Stella had risen somewhat, bought it back for $300,000, and made a handsome new sale.

On the other hand, museum basements are full of beautiful paintings that turned out to be exact copies, such as El Greco's *Portrait of*

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a Man in the Brooklyn Museum or the *Still Life,* supposedly by Francisco de Zurbaran, in the St. Louis Art Museum. The inauthenticity of the latter was established considerably after its purchase.

Some of the copies are just as good as one would expect. There is another story, again told by Perls, of a Picasso that was being sold from an impeccable collection of early Cubist works owned by a flamboyant Parisian figure, the Vicomtesse Marie-Laure de Noailles. Because a reliable chain of ownership is one of the facts to which every responsible dealer wants to attest, Perls naturally was interested. Everything looked right, even the reverse of the canvas, dotted with all the right dealer's labels and proofs of exhibition; but, Perls said, "When the specific bell doesn't ring, I know that something must be wrong."

The painting was compared with its reproduction in the Picasso catalogue raisonne and immediately was seen to be a copy. It transpired that at one time the Vicomtesse was living with the painter Dominguez, then a minor follower of Cubism, who eventually committed suicide. During his lifetime Dominguez was unable to sell his works. Motivated either by greed, rivalry, or envy—such feelings tending to be strong among forgers—Dominguez made a copy of the Picasso, sold the original, and placed his fake on the wall of his unsuspecting mistress's house. When told the news, the Vicomtesse simply sighed. "Ah, Dominguez, you see he is still with me," she said.

Such a philosophical attitude, while commendable, is rather rare. Members of the Art Dealers Association of America, which includes some of the most famous and reputable dealers in New York and elsewhere, tend to get testy if the subject of fakes is raised too insistently. A spokesman explained that the situation is analogous to a plane crash. The press makes much of the accident and does not mention the millions of passenger-miles flown safely. Similarly, Eugene Thaw, a prominent member of the ADAA, growled, "You journalists overblow it." The occasional fake was bound to slip through because dealers were fallible, he said, but most dealers had too much at stake to sell one intentionally. He referred to a New York State law requiring the seller to provide a warranty of authenticity.

There is no question that any respected New York dealer would stand behind his attribution and take back a doubtful work. The general public, however, may not share the forger's knowledge that this is not an absolute guarantee of safety, because the burden of proving that a work is falsely labeled rests with the buyer. To attempt to argue one's technical points before the average, uninformed jury can have the undesirable effect of merely confusing them and bringing about a "plague on both your houses" attitude. Furthermore, the buyer seeking legal redress may have difficulty finding an expert who is willing to stand up and be counted. Such experts have been sued by sellers. There are people like Thaw who consider it a far less heinous crime to give to a master what he did not paint than to blacken the reputation of what may prove one day to be genuine. It is one of those enduring debates about which opinion always will be at odds.

Dominguez made a copy of the Picasso, sold the original, and placed his fake on the wall of his unsuspecting mistress's house. When told the news, the Vicomtesse simply sighed.

The most serious drawback to forging has not been mentioned. Faking a master's style requires, if one sets out to make an identical match, a skill so exacting that every nerve end must be keyed up to its highest pitch; yet the painting must look effortless. While placing every stroke with mathematical precision, the forger must at the same time simulate the mood of the artist, who splashed his paint where he would with happy abandon. Oh unhappy forger! No wonder his work feels tight and labored. No wonder that a sensitive viewer, one with an eye analogous to a musician's pitch-perfect ear, can intuitively see through to the dead heart of a fake. The divine spark of life is not in it; the spark never was there.

There exist forgers so skilled that they can manage to breathe a semblance of life into their dead re-creations and fool even those with the pronounced visual equivalent of an ear for false notes. These will run afoul of a little-known law of the fake, which is that a forger never can paint exactly what he is looking at. Ioni, the nineteenth-century faker of early Italian Renaissance works, is an excellent example because, to our eyes, his saints and Madonnas are too pretty. Where we now see in the originals intense devotion and awe, he and his generation saw something closer to posturing and to a cloying sentimentality. Without intending it, Ioni painted his generation's response to the *quattrocento*, the period of fifteenth-century Italian art and literature.

"It is this combination of the old style and harmony with the contemporary that makes forgeries of this type so attractive at first," wrote Kathryn C. Johnson, research assistant, in the catalogue accompanying the Minneapolis Institute of Arts' *Fakes and Forgeries* exhibition in the fall of 1973. Indeed, after visiting some great European museums, Mark Twain observed that he vastly preferred the modern copies to the true Old Masters—no doubt only half in jest. Because they see with the same eyes, none of the forger's contemporaries can perceive the obvious distortion, at least for a while. However, as time passes, distance acts as a disillusioning force. At that point even an amateur can spot the difference, which is why our hypothetical forger has to work fast, with a glum inner certainty that he is bound to be found out sooner or later. As Dali once so aptly said, "Being a *modern* painter is the only thing, no matter what you do, that you cannot avoid being." ■

Meryle Secrest is an **SR** contributing editor.

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BEVERLY HALL

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Marsha Norman: Writing for the "Least of Our Brethren"

She lives in New York, and her Pulitzer-Prize-winning play " 'night, Mother" is playing on Broadway, but Marsha Norman is still very much a product of her Kentucky roots.

BY KATE STOUT

Marsha Norman is still blinking from the limelight. A mere seven years ago she was only dreaming of writing plays. Now, after winning the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for her play *'night, Mother*, she has to struggle to find time for her writing. Just answering the flood of mail she receives daily is as much work as she can handle. "I've just made a tiny dent in this three-foot-high stack of mail," she laments, "and my husband comes in with thirty more letters."

Such are the travails of having a hit play on Broadway and becoming an overnight media event. For Norman, the attention is a mixed blessing. Though she resents the infringement on her time, she feels a moral obligation to answer every letter. She notes, "I'm not very pleasant to be around when I'm not working," and she adds with a wry laugh, "I'm not all that pleasant to be around when I *am* working."

Intelligent and disarmingly forthright, Norman, 36, takes herself and the world around her with the utmost seriousness. Wary of strangers and resentful of intrusion, she is nonetheless a humanist. This, like her attitude toward the fan mail, indicates a woman who is both complex and contradictory.

She is a small woman, petite. Although she is five-feet-four, a respectable height, her size is a source of great sensitivity. She sees herself as operating in a land of giants—she will tell you that eighty percent of the population is taller than she is—which may explain both her liking for children and her cerebral mien. In fact, she seems to wear her intellect like armor.

Her high, prominent cheekbones add to an external severity that she cultivates in public, and the sunglasses she wears are large enough to hide more than her eyes. The vulnerability is there, but is glimpsed by strangers only when she is off guard, as when she maneuvers through the body-traffic in New York's theater district holding fast to the hand of a friend.

'night, Mother, Norman's fifth play, is about a woman's decision to end her life. Norman is decidedly oblique about whether she has personal knowledge of suicide, and she prefers to discuss her play in more objective terms. "What I wanted to do was get as close to the line of thought that produces an action like Jessie's [the suicidal daughter] and to try to understand how she might have felt," she says of the impetus for the play. "We are generally cheated of any firsthand knowledge of how suicides feel. And in a sense that is something of what I think I can contribute as a writer."

Though she is a thinking person's playwright, Norman is not intrigued by the realm of pure ideas so much as by the arabesques and backsteps a person's mind will make to save his integrity as a human. This process particularly intrigues her when it comes to humanity's forgotten faces. "It's almost the reverse of what great magicians do," she says. "What I do are appearing acts, as opposed to vanishing acts. I really want to make visible people that are rarely seen and never heard."

So it was that Jessie Cates in *'night, Mother* found her way out of Norman's social conscience and on to Broadway—not exactly out of a hat, though, but after four months of hard work in Norman's apartment on Manhattan's fashionable Upper West Side and a successful premiere at Boston's American Repertory Theatre.

The play opens in a shadowbox setting, a Sears living room on a stage twice inset by black borders. Jessie Cates, a woman in her thirties, is dressed, ominously, in a loose black sweater and grey corduroys. Thelma, her mother, is wearing a housedress and sweater the colors of life: pink and blue. Deep in the heart of middle America, they are spending yet another Saturday night officiating over the mundane. As her mother knits and chats mindlessly, Jessie, overweight and still further weighed down by her thoughts, moves heavily across the stage; she asks her mother about a beach towel, nags her to wash her hands so Jessie can give her a manicure, casually asks where her dead daddy's gun is. To Thelma's incredulity, Jessie then matter-of-factly announces she is go-

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She was writing, but doing so with a good deal of frustration, in part because she was not taken seriously enough.

ing to kill herself.

For the next ninety wrenching minutes, Thelma moves from disbelief to horror to resignation—a resignation that does not by any means suggest acceptance—and is transformed from a happy, unquestioning, slightly dotty but endearing old woman to a distraught and defeated mother.

"I don't like to think about things," Thelma says. "I like things to go on." Jessie, like Norman, does think about things. In fact, she cannot escape her thoughts, and what she thinks is that her life is beyond hope. The reasons for her thinking matter little: that her husband has left her, her son has gone bad, she cannot keep a job, and that she has no interests, friends, or prospects. What matters is that this is Jessie's assessment of her life. "That's what you think," snaps Thelma after one of Jessie's pitiless moments of self-deprecation, to which Jessie replies, "You're right, Mama. That *is* what I think."

Written with excruciating honesty and with the directness of an interrogation, *'night, Mother* transcends all the potential for melodrama, manipulation, and easy adjudication that such a subject has, and so forces the audience to take Jessie on her own terms. In so doing, the play spawns some very prickly questions: Is life, no matter what the quality, so sacred that no suffering is too great? Is it better to let one's life just happen, as Thelma does, or to be master of one's fate right down to the last minute, as Jessie is? Can suicide indeed "make sense" when one is not "retarded or deranged," as Jessie is neither?

Norman does not answer these questions; she scrupulously avoids answering them. "Presenting is my work: representing. Whether we accept Jessie's decision or not is a matter of personal choice." So the questions become Jessie's "note" to us, and her action ours to wrestle with.

In many ways *'night, Mother* is quintessentially Norman, both personally and professionally: daring, confrontational, unsparing. "There is a quality to my mind not to settle for the sentimental answer. I want things to be clear and true and fair."

That particular turn of mind is very much a product of her "come froms," as they say in the South. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, in the autumn of 1947, Norman was the oldest of Billie and Bertha Williams' four children. From her earliest years she was steeped in the black-and-white world of her parents' fundamentalist religion, particularly as wielded by her disciplinarian mother. Even as a youngster, she had doubts. At about age 8 she sat in the front pew of the family's church and listened to the minister lambaste the congregation about the perils of evil and the unspeakable fate of sinners. "Nothing this scary can be true," she remembers thinking to herself. Now, almost thirty years later, Norman laughs at the memory. "When you're confronted with a choice as clear as 'It is either good or it is bad,' the only real choice you have is to say, 'That's ridiculous.' "

In this childhood revelation, one that Norman had to keep to herself for years, were the seeds of much that would inform her plays: an instinctive resistance to emotional manipulation, an unshakable reliance on her own mind, an aversion to judgment, and an almost pathological need for the privacy to store such volatile secrets. Still, as she herself says, she did not reject her religious background out of hand. Although her intellect rebelled her morality held fast. "Those principles, that's how I live my life now."

Because she lacked a role model or suitable mentor, Norman's desire to write creatively was diverted into other outlets until she was 29, when she wrote her first play, *Getting Out*. Her earliest works were essays written at Durrett High School in Louisville; Martha Ellison, then an English teacher, taught her all four years. Ellison recalls that in her junior year Norman wrote an essay on the suffering of Job entitled "Why Do Good Men Suffer?" The essay won first prize in a local writing contest and was published in the *Kentucky English Bulletin*.

Ellison, who later worked with Norman and who has maintained a friendship with her over the years, says that even then "Marsha wrote with a great deal of ease." Her essays stood out because of "the unusual twist she would give an assignment. She had profound insights into things even as a kid." Norman grew up in the middle-class neighborhood of Audubon Park, an area of Louisville just north of the airport and southwest of the more fashionable neighborhoods. Ellison remembers that Norman was popular with the boys, played the piano and tennis with a vengeance, worked on both the yearbook and the school newspaper, and was scholar enough to make the National Honor Society. "The thing that impressed me the most was that she was the best-disciplined kid I'd ever seen," Ellison recalls.

That discipline and her academic standing won her a scholarship to Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. A small liberal arts school, Agnes Scott had no writing curriculum. Norman took up philosophy instead. In the department she found something of a mentor in Merle Walker, the chairman and a pre-Socratic. "You look two seconds at my work," Norman says, "and you see her influence. That's just a crucial part of me."

While she was in college, Norman worked for two years as a volunteer in the burn unit of Atlanta's Grady Memorial Hospital. It was the Sixties, and although she says she is "not a political creature," she wanted to make a contribution. In those days, she did so by reading to the patients.

Upon her graduation in 1969 from Agnes Scott, where she says nobody would remember her now but for her recent burst into the public eye—"I cultivated my invisibility"—the pull to care for the physically and psychically wounded grew stronger. She returned to Louisville, earned her M.A.T. at the University of Louisville in 1971 and "two-thirds of another master's at the Center for Understanding Media in New York," got married to her former English teacher, Michael Norman, and began

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looking around for another nest of injured birds.

She found it in the children's department at Central State Hospital. A *Cuckoo*-esque mental facility outside Louisville, Central State has dark-red brick buildings set back from the LaGrange Road on acreage that is the stuff of country clubs; the land is almost a mockery of the pain locked inside the buildings. The corridors echo with wailing. In the adult units, patients line the halls in dumb silence or pace to the beat of their own demonic drummers. The pathos is most acute in the children's unit, where young lives are sidetracked by emotional illness, often permanently.

It is no surprise that the germ of *Getting Out*, a play about an abused and violent young woman who serves time for murder, took hold of Norman here. At Central State she encountered a 13-year-old girl so violent she seemed to bruise people by walking into the room. Norman became interested in her and followed the girl even after she herself left Central State, finally learning the girl had gone to prison for murder.

Norman lasted two years at the hospital. That, she once said, was as much as she could take. "I cared so much for those kids," she said in an interview, "but I could see that it didn't matter to the bureaucracy whether they made any progress."

Exhausted, she reversed the coin and took a job at the Brown School for gifted children in 1973. At this Louisville school she taught one of only two courses in the state in filmmaking for adolescents. Later she developed the humanities curriculum for the middle-school ages under the supervisory eye of Martha Ellison, who was by then principal at the Brown School. According to Ellison, Norman was a fine teacher and a poor administrator. "She had no tolerance for mediocrity," Ellison says.

Three years later Norman was writing full time, but her writing was peripheral to what she really wanted to write. She tossed off articles for the defunct city magazine *Louisville Today* and book reviews for the *Louisville Times*, and she created and wrote *The Jelly Bean Journal*, a children's supplement to the Saturday evening paper. She was far from happy. Her marriage to Michael Norman had broken up, although she continued to use his name professionally. She was writing, but doing so with a good deal of frustration, in part because she was not taken seriously enough.

"I was perceived as charming and funny and smart, but really of very little significance," she says, a fact she credits to her height and to her specialty in children's writing. "Because I wrote *The Jelly Bean Journal* and because I was small, people thought I was interested in minor issues." At a cocktail party that was attended by many Louisville newspaper people, she recalls, she was talking about Russell Hoban's book *Turtle Diary*. "I was raving on and on about it and someone, this very snippy person, said to me, 'Oh, it's a children's book, right?' Assuming that because I wrote *The Jelly Bean Journal* I only read children's books."

The combined effect of these things was to make her feel more and more isolated. "I had nobody to talk to. I was an alien creature in my immediate world. So, why was I so concerned about behaving well? Once I understood that, that that [isolation] was absolutely as much as they ["the world, my family, my friends, the people around me"] could do to me, then suddenly I was free; the door was open and I might as well do whatever I wanted, and what I wanted to do was write for the theater. So I did."

The result was *Getting Out;* looking back now, Norman refers to a line in that play as being key to her state of mind then, as summing up "what I understood in my life that allowed me to write the play." Arlie, the incarcerated young woman, says, "You already got me in segregation. What else you gonna do?"

The year was 1977. Norman had in hand the book for a musical on American inventors that she had written for adolescents. Operating on the principle of nothing ventured, nothing gained, she sent the manuscript to Jon Jory, a social acquaintance and producing director of Louisville's Actors Theatre. Even then, Actors Theatre was already coming into its own as one of the foremost regional theaters in the country; such plays as *Crimes of the Heart* and *Agnes of God* have since premiered there before going on to Broadway.

Although the inventors piece was not right for Actors Theatre, Jory liked it enough that he invited Norman to visit him. "She was not theater-wise," Jory remembers, but after meeting with her he was convinced she had talent. "Her conversation was fluent and colorful, she was an instinctive storyteller, and she was very interested in the theater." Those three things prompted Jory to suggest she try writing something else, something that touched on a local issue; he proposed the subject of bus-

"All rise. The court of the city of New York, of the county of New York, of the state of New York, is now in session. The Honorable James T. Williams presiding. And on sax: Rich Haver."

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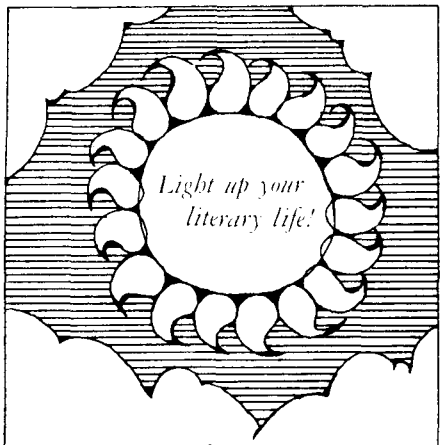

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ing, then an extremely sensitive issue in Louisville. Norman had a better idea. She told him she wanted to write a play about a girl she remembered from Central State.

Getting Out portrays the girl at two points in her life. Arlie Holsclaw is a surly teen-age hoodlum who has been boxed silly by experience; one day she and her pimp murder a cab driver in a bollixed robbery attempt, landing her in federal prison. Arlene Holsclaw, the same woman eight years later at the time of her parole, must shake herself loose from her former self and from the past that created that girl, if she is to save herself. She is not just getting out of prison, but getting out of her old skin. The process is not unlike Norman's own life at the time of the writing.

Co-winner of the 1977 Actors Theatre festival, *Getting Out* premiered on November 3 to raves. In it are Marsha Norman's trademarks: powerful language that draws on not only dialect (of Eastern Kentucky in this case) but the lyricism of the commonplace; a fearless commitment to honesty, even if the truth reaches to the unpleasant; and dry, always perfectly timed humor. Like *'night, Mother*, it is emotionally grueling, yet free of emotional puppetry. And it champions the underdog.

" 'Inasmuch as you have done it and to the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me,' " Norman quotes from the Gospel of Matthew. "That's what I'm doing. I'm saying, 'Let's take the least of these, our brethren. Let's look at them.' That's simply very important to me."

From Actors Theatre, *Getting Out* swept across the American theatrical landscape like a Kentucky tornado, touching down next at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in February 1978, where it whipped up more enthusiasm. Then it whirled into New York, playing off-Broadway for eight months in 1978 and 1979 and winning the praise of New York's toughest critics. Since then it has been produced in several countries—it was a smash in Poland—and has been performed in prisons across the country.

Not bad for a beginner. Life was definitely looking up. Her first play had made it from conception to New York in two years. She was made playwright-in-residence at Actors Theatre the same season that *Getting Out* played off-Broadway. And, she met and married Dann Byck Jr., now 47, a founder and the first president of Actors Theatre, and heir to one of the oldest family retailing businesses in Louisville.

Spurred on, Norman wrote more. Early in 1978 her second play, *Third and Oak*, premiered at Actors Theatre. It consisted of two one-act plays, *The Laundromat* and *The Pool Room*. *The Laundromat* tells the story of two women, one newly widowed and one victimized by a bad marriage, who come together late one night in a downtown laundromat. *The Pool Room*, the lesser of the two plays, is about two men: one is the proprietor of the pool room and the last of three vintage pool sharks whose ghosts still fill the room, and the other is the son of one of the original threesome. What links the four characters is the kind of loneliness that fills city streets with middle-of-the-night marauders.

Third and Oak, a real street corner in downtown Louisville where stately Victorian mansions rub shoulders with shotgun houses and tenements, proved that *Getting Out* was no accident. But it was not up to the level of authority and depth her first play attained. *The Laundromat* is best remembered for its moments of exquisite detail—"I found our beachball," says Alberta, the widow, "when I cleaned out the basement. I can't let the air out of it. It's his [her husband's] breath in there"—and for its wry one-liners—"Mom's just got me and giant size Cheer," says DeeDee, the other woman. *The Pool Room* simply maintains Norman's preoccupation with thwarted dreams and derailed lives.

A slump is not uncommon after a blast of success—a fact which will, no doubt, have some critics salivating in advance of Norman's next play. Several critics have written unfavorably of *'night, Mother* [see review on page 47]. *Third and Oak's* uneven success was followed by the least noteworthy of Norman's plays, *Circus Valentine*, about a traveling circus on the small-town circuit; written while she was playwright-in-residence, it premiered at Actors Theatre in 1979. Not exactly a flop, it is still very much the "poor relation" in the family of Norman's work. After that she wrote a comedy called *The Holdup* based on tales of the new West told her by her grandfather. At Actors Theatre it progressed no fur-

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ther than a workshop production in 1980. A rewrite of that play, however, met with largely favorable reviews last spring when it was produced in San Francisco.

From her fundamentalist background, then, Norman evolved first as both skeptic and humanist. From the skeptic grew a commitment to the truth, and from the humanist grew a sense of responsibility to the nameless people who shuffle along the sidewalks of our times, on whose lives society generally turns a blind eye. The two, skeptic and humanist, come together in her plays to form a philosophical and sociological definition of human integrity.

Finding their most mature attitudes in *'night, Mother* are three essential elements of that definition of integrity: that freedom and dignity come from a sense of control over one's life; that faith in oneself "is responsible for most of what is accomplished in the world"; and that hope is the key to survival.

In *'night, Mother*, Jessie says no to hope. Yet by making her decision, by choosing to get off the bus before it's her stop, she takes control of her life and so reclaims her dignity. Ironically, Jessie's decision is both an act of faith—in herself, in her ability to take her own life and to know it's the right decision for her—and the only thing she manages successfully to complete. Her death is more than an act of desperation, it is an accomplishment.

Although Norman is now something of an expatriate, as she and her husband-producer moved to New York in 1981, she is adamant that her reservoir of material will remain the same. "If anything," she says, "I have greater freedom to write about Kentucky now."

Norman's work-in-progress is the book and lyrics for a musical called *The Shakers*, based on the religious sect that set up one of the most successful experiments in communal living in nineteenth-century America, including a community in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. The Shakers were known for celibacy, for a dependence on the land and on handicrafts, and for mysterious religious rites which included shaking, whirling, and trembling.

Late last May, Norman finished "a version of the book that I love. I think it's good, it's clear, it's funny." She expects a good year and a half to pass before she and her collaborator, composer Norman L. Berman, will see it reach production. Just where the musical will appear is unknown, she says, although after *'night, Mother's* success it seems destined for New York.

Sometimes, especially since the Pulitzer, Norman pulls herself up and reflects on whether she deserves all that has happened to her. On the one hand she says, "I'm a nobody. How can I have all this?" On the other hand she feels "blessed with talent, energy, curiosity, and wonderful educational opportunities." Despite the contradiction, the two self-images merge, in the mirror of her work, as a social conscience. Curiously, her conscience has a self-ordained debt to pay, from answering every letter to chronicling the victories and the defeats of the least of our brethren. ■

Kate Stout is a freelance writer living in New York City.

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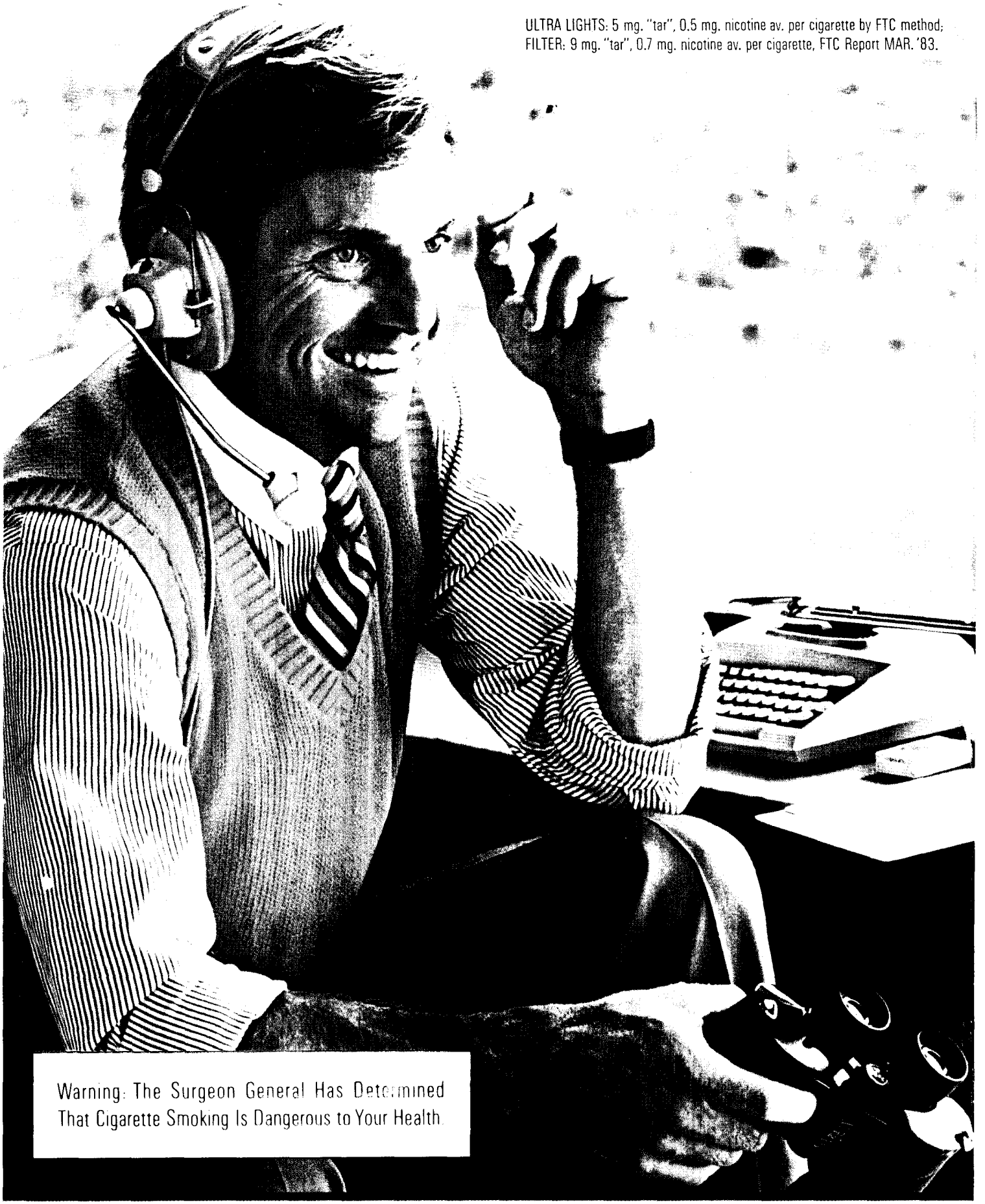
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FILM

Judith Crist

Heat and Chill

There's an international flavor to this fall's film scene, with a variety of offerings for the "holding" season before the Oscar-oriented blockbusters arrive at year's end.

The most exotic and enchanting of the new arrivals is *Heat and Dust,* which marks the twenty-first anniversary of an Indian-American-European collaboration that producer Ismail Merchant, director James Ivory, and author Ruth Prawer Jhabvala began in 1962 with *The Householder.* Over the years, making such memorable works as *Shakespeare Wallah, The Guru, Bombay Talkie, Autobiography of a Princess, The Wild Party, Roseland, The Europeans,* and *Quartet,* they have explored a variety of societies, times, and places. The predominant focus has been on the encounter of East and West, on the clash and conquering of cultures.

India, as seducer rather than conqueror, is explored in *Heat and Dust,* with screenplay by Jhabvala based on her own novel. Where *Gandhi* provided, through biography, a fascinating story of India's emergence into modern times and its half-century battle for independence and civil rights, this film is concerned with the nation's background, its textures and character, its immutable conventions, and its timeless, mystic appeal.

The story is of two Englishwomen: the present-day Anne, who is researching the "scandalous" life of her grand-aunt Olivia, and Olivia, who went to India in the early 1920s as the wife of a civil servant. After working at first from letters and interviews with Olivia's contemporaries, Anne goes to India for further research. Olivia's story and Anne's experiences are intercut on the screen, and the parallels come clear to stunning effect.

Olivia, we are warned, was not a "proper memsahib." She is bored with her colonial peers and fascinated with the local prince, the Nawab, and his entourage; she is quick to appreciate the undercurrents of passion and potential violence around her. Refusing to take to the hills with the other colonial wives during the hot spell and dust storms, she becomes a target for the Nawab. Handsome, charming, impatient, and even childish in his imperiousness, he cannot be rejected, and Olivia "outrages" the conventions of both the English and the Indians. Anne, coming to India some sixty years later and living with an Indian family, finds the strange culture, with its mixture of superstition, tradition, and modernity, as alluring as a potentate's palace and baubles. She too chooses an unconventional path, albeit a more plebeian one, which leads her a shared locale—and a shared commitment—with Olivia.

The filmmakers' tapestry is rich, with lovely vignettes of the snobbery, suspicion, and double-dealing on both sides during the Raj (British rule). Above all, it is marked by suggestion, by an appreciation of the lure of "foreignness," and by an understanding of submission to alien custom. As always, Jhabvala's script contains acid observation and witty detail. The Nawab's dinner party, with spicy gossip and luxurious service, climaxes with the entry of a marching band of Indian bagpipers playing the local anthem. Then there's the departure of Chitananda, an American hippie and a convert to Buddhism, who befriends Anne but finally heads for home and tiled bathrooms.

The international cast is headed by Julie Christie, whose Anne is a vibrant young woman, very much at ease and open to experience. But Greta Sacchi, an Italian-born, British-bred actress, takes over the film as Olivia, innocently sensuous in her beauty, inexorable in her desire for passion. Shashi Kapoor as the Nawab is irresistible, a matinee-idol charmer. The rest of the cast is equally satisfying, with Christopher Cazenove as Olivia's hidebound husband, Mickolas Grace as the Nawab's pet Englishman, and Madhur Jaffrey outstanding as the Nawab's mother. Kudos also to Walter Lassally's cinematography, Wilfred Shingleton's production design, Barbara Lane's costumes, and Richard Robbins' score. Merchant Ivory Productions

COLUMBIA PICTURES

The cast of *The Big Chill* provides memorable ensemble playing.

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COLUMBIA PICTURES

Julie Christie in *Heat and Dust*.

has come of age with this exquisite film.

Appropriately for the start of the academic year, *Educating Rita,* a charming contemporary British comedy, challenges us to consider what education is all about. Adapted from his London stage hit by Willy Russell, this delightful tale of a young working-class woman bent on self-discovery and of the alcoholic academic who guides her bears only surface resemblance to Shaw's *Pygmalion.* Rita's is a gritty odyssey from aspiration to "culture" to self-realization. Her guide is a cynic who is astounded to discover the remnants of sensibility within himself. Julie Walters, who created the title role on stage, and Michael Caine, who reveals his talents increasingly with each role, probe the core of teacher--student dynamics with stiletto-sharp performances.

Rita is a streetwise hairdresser of 26, trapped in lower-class domesticity, but aware of options and hungry for an education. Enrolling in literature tutorials at Open University, she is assigned to Frank Bryant, a once-aspiring scholar who has found in alcohol his escape from dreary academics and a disintegrating romance. Cynical, disillusioned, but unable to resist her determination, Bryant sets about educating Rita, and a voyage of mutual discovery begins. Rita is the antithesis of the academic world that has stultified Bryant: witty, commonsensical, and shrewd, she gets to the heart of literary matters, and to that of the man who is guiding her. Through her his feelings are revived.

Russell is not concerned with obvious simplistics. His characters are complex and so is Rita's voyage to selfhood. Bryant is losing his lover to a colleague; Rita's husband wants her pregnant and in the pub on Saturday nights. Rita finds herself "a freak, a half-caste" with her family, so she breaks away to live her own life, culture-hounding it until she would "just die without Mahler." For a time Bryant cannot stand the Frankenstein monster he has created. Finally the two of them discover the balance point and what the right of choice means. Guided by producer-director Lewis Gilbert, who directed Caine in *Alfie*, the two provide us with a cogent, bittersweet comedy.

Whether academia is to you recent, long ago, or far away, there's Lawrence Kasdan's *The Big Chill.* Kasdan, who wrote *Raiders of the Lost Ark, Continental Divide, The Empire Strikes Back,* and *Return of the Jedi*, made his writer-director debut with the memorable *Body Heat.* In this second and very different film, he is concerned with a reunion of college friends fifteen years after their school days. Whereas John Sayles' *Return of the Secaucus Seven,* a sweet 1980 story of student antiwar activists spending a weekend together after ten years, dealt with the nostalgia of being thirty-ish, Kasdan is concerned more with the malaise of 35. He depicts the realization that while campus idealism may not weather real-world storms, some relationships do.

The reunion, unplanned, takes place after the suicide of Alex, one of the group's housemates from the University of Michigan. After the service, the seven feel a need to reestablish their relationships. They spend the weekend together at the nearby summer home of one couple, exploring their past and present, eating, drinking, doping, pranking, coupling, rediscovering themselves and each other. You have a choice of "big chill" metaphors—whether the chill is the awareness of death, the coldness of the world at large, or the cooling of youthful passion.

Kasdan's triumph is in giving us excellent company for the weekend, a group of ultratalented young actors who bring the Ann Arbor alumni to charming life. Kevin Kline, as the head of a chain of running-shoe stores, and Glenn Close, as a doctor, play the married hosts with whom Alex and his young lover, Meg Tilly, had been staying while remodeling a nearby cabin; Tom Berenger is a recently divorced, Tom Selleck-like television star; Jeff Goldblum is a wisecracking and cynical writer for *People* magazine; Mary Kay Place is a successful lawyer interested in motherhood without marriage; Jobeth Williams is a would-be writer who's given it all up to raise her sons; and William Hurt is a disillusioned Vietnam veteran who has given up psychology for drugs. The seven and Tilly are superb in revealing their past and present selves, as is Don Galloway in an all-too-brief appearance as Williams' husband. It is he who notes, "You set your priorities and that's the way life is. Nobody said it was going to be fun." Marked by memorable ensemble playing, the weekend is fun for us, despite the chill. ■

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DANCE

Nancy Goldner

Specters of the Rose

A friend whose daughter finally persuaded her to throw a proper birthday party for kids reports with some amusement on how wholeheartedly she became converted to the idea. She bought crepe paper in a dozen colors, two pin-the-tail-on-the-donkeys, and her girl's favorite brands of ketchup and jellybeans. The fete Paul Taylor made for guest artists Suzanne Farrell and Peter Martins at a fund-raising gala for the Taylor company was for adults, but one saw in the dance all the exuberance of a first-time event for the host. Having never choreographed for ballet dancers before, let alone for dancers of Farrell's and Martins' stature, Taylor made his short duet *Musette* a compendium of all he knew about ballet.

The lovely things about *Musette* are that Taylor knows a good deal about how ballet dancers move, is as warm to Farrell's unique gifts as any long-term Farrell-lover, and keeps his enthusiasm within bounds. A charming first plunge, *Musette* is also a good dance, its every trick of the trade subsumed by a larger flow of movement. Its tricks are inspired, naturally, by Farrell. *Musette* takes admiring advantage of her easy sweep from one large pose to another, her profoundly proud extensions, and her canny ability to fold her body around her partner's without looking like drapery. For all the accomplishment of Taylor's own dancers, which seemed to grow still more as the New York season wore on, they couldn't have managed the full-blown arabesques and *développés à la seconde* of a Farrell. In *Musette*, Taylor got his chance to scale the heights, and he enjoyed himself, not surprisingly.

Musette does have a few surprises, though, most of them wise. One is that Taylor did not impose the Taylor style on Farrell and Martins. Considering the unusually intense attachment Taylor has for specific steps and bodily alignments, their absence from *Musette* is noteworthy. Could the dancers not adapt to Taylor's habits? Perhaps not, but then why should they? Martins, however, could easily have been worked into a lighter, trimmer edition of the Tayloresque play on inverted shapes and weighted speed. Taylor used him conventionally, and in the back seat. This surprise may result from the dance's lack of room within its scope to color Martins in fully, and as I wrote above, Taylor's appetite for his novel venture steered clear of greed. So, we'll wait for the next dance. The third surprise was that Farrell and Martins wore their hair permed. Now *that* was un-understandable and unlikable.

In *Sunset*, a new work Taylor made this year for his company, the khaki-uniformed men wear red berets, and the brilliance in color impinges on the dance's twilight glow of feeling. The unsettling aspect of those berets works *for* the dance, though. It hints of the passion Taylor and designer Alex Katz thought better left unsaid, and at the end, when the soldiers have left and one of the girls presses to her heart the beret left behind, its vivid color attests to the power of memory.

Sunset is about the junction of memory and wish, the mind's capacity to conjure up happenings that would have been nice *had* they happened. The wish-memories are lived from various points of view; the quality of the musings shifts too, from vernacular narrative into amorphous streams of consciousness, from athleticism into lyricism. At one point *Sunset* seems to bolt into the clear light of high noon and into present time, so different from the rest of the dance is the moment's tenor. I love the way Taylor makes it all hang together by a thread. He makes sure that someone, somewhere on the stage, always moves in a drifting and sidling fashion, slowly arching an arm or simply shifting weight from one foot to another. Those motions are what keep *Sunset* nestled in thought, give it an abiding sense of lingering.

The sensation of prolonged time is also in the score's string music by Elgar, which if not written in the nineteenth century sounds as though it wishes it had been. Elgar's lushness has nothing in common with the robustness of Taylor's "speech," but the music's totally sincere nostalgia is *Sunset* on the nose. A dance that covers as much ground as *Sunset*, draws upon collaborators as diverse as Elgar and the contemporary artist Alex Katz, and that still manages to come through with a single, strong image is a definition of excellence. *Sunset* is a Taylor masterpiece.

Sunset begins with soldiers standing about idly, rather contemplatively, under a leafy, pale blue sky. A few of them lounge against a steel railing placed catty-cornered on the stage. A couple of girls wander by, a couple of guys take turns showing off. A few more girls enter, more of the soldiers (six in all) get into the act. The scene could be a retake of Jerome Robbins' classic *Fancy Free*, about sailors on the prowl in New York during World War II, except that *Sunset* isn't joyous; it's a memory of joy. As "regular-fella" as the men are, they seem truer to themselves when they retreat to the sidelines, pondering and recalling. When they're dancing they're 20; when they stand still, they're 40.

The girls don't know if they belong in this place. In an absolutely wonderful moment, they rush on

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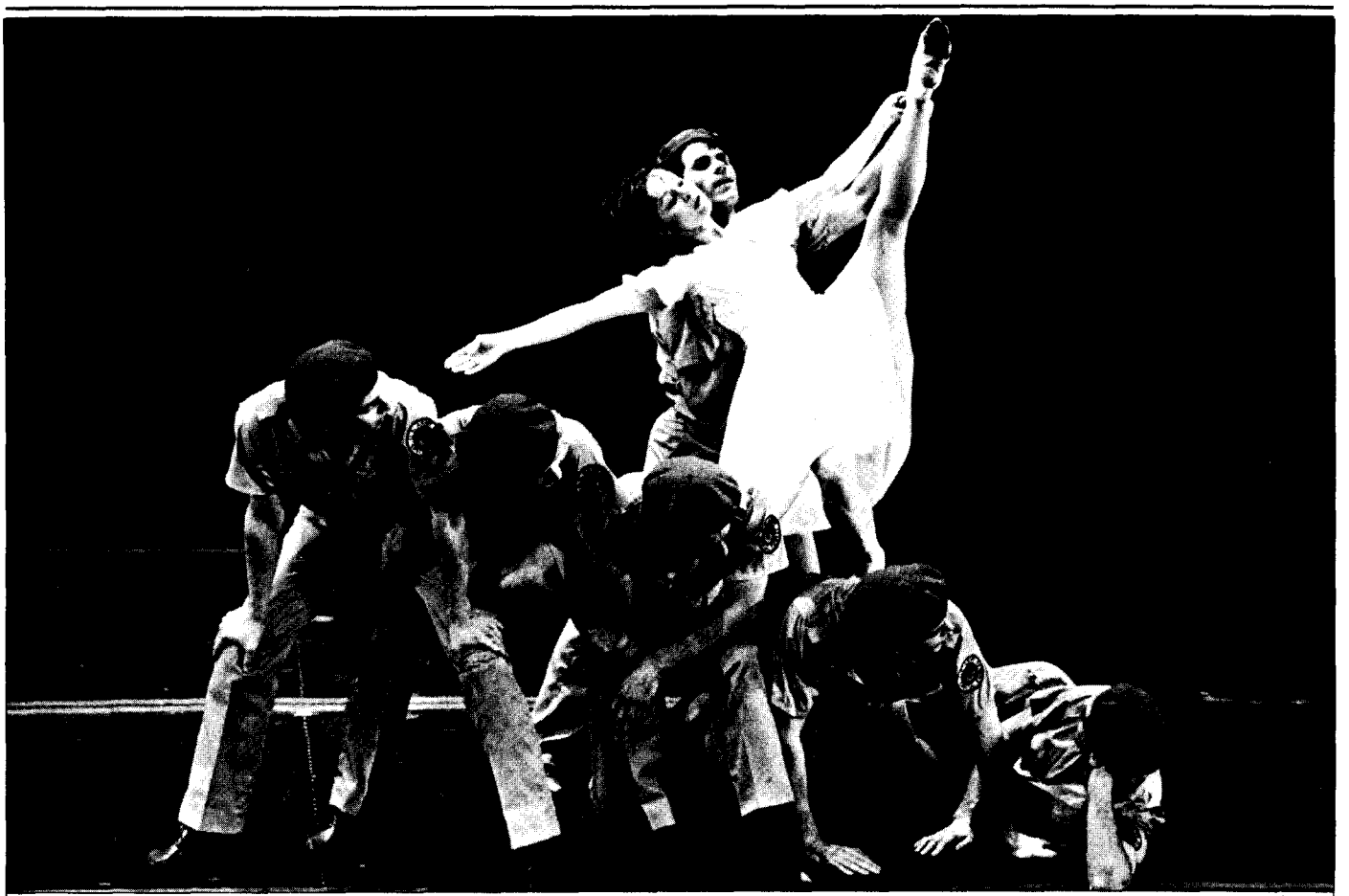
JOHAN ELBERS



The Paul Taylor Dance Company in *Sunset*.

and, not knowing which foot to put down, rush off. In real time it happens like a thought caught on the wing; as an image of that kind of thought, the moment battens down permanently the central elusiveness of the piece. Anyway, it doesn't matter that the girls don't know what to do, because the boys' behavior grows more ardent. Their solo exhibitions evolve into courtship rites. They sweep the girls into the air, flying them across the open space like banners. They encircle the girls like festive wreaths. And rather than put them on pedestals, they themselves become the pedestal on which the girls climb. It's hard work, these love games, and don't think that the girls maneuver on the man-made edifice without taking great care. But people can accomplish in memory what they cannot in life.

Suddenly the Elgar breaks off, and in the place of surging string music come sounds of bird calls, some misty and some sharp. Perhaps it is the relative austerity of the nature sounds that accounts for the dance's swift gasp of intensity, and hence its feeling of taking place, if not in the present, then in the keenest lobe of the brain. The group pairs off here. The point of view from which the story is told no longer seems exclusively the men's. The women, too, have become dreamers. The couples dance together slowly, moving near the ground. The women's bodies bend sensuously, like lapping water. Then Elgar returns, and the dance shifts ground once more. Now it's the women who court the men, dancing before rather than alongside them, and even doing a bit of lifting themselves. Taylor's humor is irrepressible when it comes to role-playing stuff, for whom should the girls select for the project but the heaviest man of the lot. Well, they pull the feat off, but as Taylor may or may not mean to imply by ensuing events, they lose the men in the process. *Sunset* ends with the men's departure. The women remain behind, one of them with a token of remembrance. Was *Sunset* really *their* dream all along?

Ambiguity is *Sunset's* power. Fairy tales, however, cannot hedge (a witch is a witch), and Taylor knows how to handle them as well. The prince within the witch is an equally clear state of affairs; he need only emerge at the right time. In *Snow White*, Taylor's third new dance of the year, the prince emerges many times, and each magical appearance finds him a bit more swell-headed. No matter. He graciously marries Ms. White and, in accordance with dancing fairy tales if not the written ones, a gala divertissement is offered for the nuptial celebration. In Taylor's version of this nineteenth-century ballet convention, the grand display of dance is provided by the dwarfs, whose eagerness to please makes up for what they lack in height.

It was for the fun of turning his rugged men into stumpy little fellas, and for the fun of turning beloved conventions upside-down, that Taylor made *Snow White*. His joke is smart, inventive, and best seen once. However, the next time I have a party I'll hire the dwarfs for the formal entertainment. ■

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Bernard I. Burt

Caribbean Creole

On Saturday night at the chic La Bateliere hotel outside Fort-de-France, the Grand Ballet de la Martinique is dancing the traditional *biguine* for patrons of the $23 dinner show in the island's fanciest restaurant. Down in the hotel's sleek discotheque, locals pay $10 to gyrate to the same catchy, three-beat tunes.

The island of Martinique has a gentle rhythm. Shops still close for a midday meal and rest. Lunch on the waterfront in Fort-de-France is a good introduction to island history and habits and an easy escape from the daily traffic jam. For openers, there is a favorite *petite punch blanc* (little white punch) made with light rum, a bit of sugar-cane syrup, and a twist of lime, on the rocks. From an impressive wine list we select a moderately priced Muscadet that crisply complements the fish. My host suggests a zesty soupe de poissons followed by grilled red snapper marinated in creole sauce. The view of the harbor from La Grand'Voile restaurant matches the superb seafood.

Tourism blossomed only recently in Martinique; it has been brought by big French hotel chains such as PLM, Meridien, Novotel, and Frantel. More is to be seen in villages along the coast and in the mountains than most tourists realize. The island's economy is heavily subsidized by Continental France and is dominated by bureaucrats and professionals with roots there. The big Air France jet slowly crossing the harbor on its approach to the Lamentin airport is a daily reminder that Paris is only eight hours away. My flight from Washington via Miami, on Eastern Airlines, took almost as long.

Fort-de-France, the commercial as well as administrative capital, has an ambiance that is part New Orleans, part Marseille, and all French. Martinique is a full department of France, roughly equivalent to a U.S. state or Canadian province, and its people enjoy the full rights and benefits of French citizenship. This accounts for the high literacy rate and modern schools, the good hospitals, the fine roads, and the high wages and prices.

Thanks to Citizen Mitterand's monetary policy, the U.S. dollar buys about twice as many French francs as it did a year ago, making Martinique a bargain. Meals in top restaurants cost about $12, and country inns offer lodging this winter for as little as $20 per night. Some of the most idyllic beaches, such as Les Salines near Ste. Anne and Les Anses d'Arlets across the bay from the capital, are utterly deserted during the week; all are free to the public.

Shopping for French perfume, crystal, and china always has been a big attraction in Martinique because there are no import taxes. Boutiques featuring Riviera and Paris *pret-a-porter* fashion line narrow streets near the cathedral. Currently "in" is Mounia's at 33 rue Perrinon, run by a Parisian model frequently seen on the cover of *W* magazine. A few blocks away, on the waterfront, are native open-air markets where ladies hawk fruit, spices, and fish shimmering with tropical color. The big marketplace is on the rue Isambert; vegetarians will love the inexpensive lunch counter.

Coming to rue de la Liberté, facing the waterfront park of La Savane, you'll note a curious iron-and-glass art nouveau structure, La Bibliothëque Schoelcher, brought here from the 1889 Paris Exposition. Restored to its original grandeur, it serves as a library and memorial to the Alsatian statesman who emancipated the island's African slaves in 1848. Nearby is the newly refurbished Musée Départmental, with three floors of displays tracing Martinique's pre-Columbian history. Arawak and Carib pottery, cooking implements, and stone axes, all of remarkably intricate design, are linked to periods from the arrival of Central American "Indians" to their defeat by the French under Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc in 1635. Rather than be enslaved, the survivors threw themselves off cliffs at Le Préchur, near the old capital of St. Pierre, calling down a curse that was fulfilled nearly 300 years later by the eruption of Mount Pelée.

Exploring this lushly forested and mountainous island is a joy. Just forty-one miles long and nineteen miles wide, it can be driven in a day, but you really want a week to savor the small inns, seaside restaurants, and highland villages. You can rent a car at the airport; advance reservations are important if you want automatic transmission for the narrow, twisting roads. A call to Hertz before you leave home will confirm availability and rates.

Topless bathers draped on a rock jetty beneath my balcony at the Bakoua Beach Hotel are an added attraction. Breakfast arrives with fresh croissants and tropical fruit, and a feeling of relaxation sets in. This ninety-eight-room resort is a rare combination of West Indies style and Continental efficiency and is managed by the owners, Guy and Yve de la Houssaye, whose family tree here dates to 1650 and has branches in Louisiana. My high-ceiling room on

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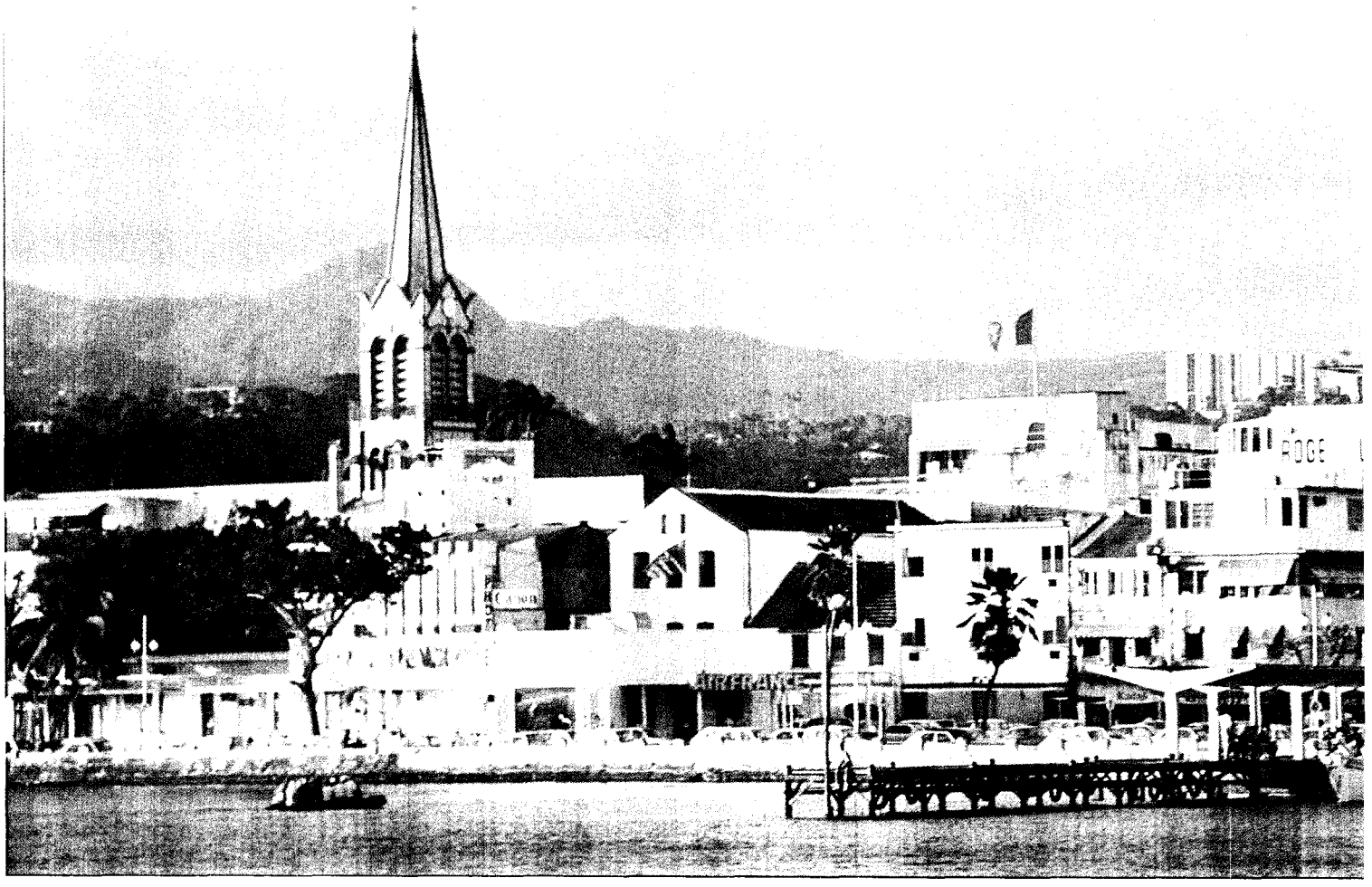

Fort-De-France has an ambiance that is part New Orleans, part Marseille, and all French.

the upper level of the beach unit (newer garden wings are on the hill) has handcrafted mahogany furniture and a big bathroom with sunken tub and bidet.

The Bakoua is in the center of a Riviera-like development at Pointe du Bout, which is a pleasant twenty-minute ferry ride from Fort-de-France and a five-minute drive from picturesque Trois-Ilets, where an empress of France was born. It's a short walk to lively bistros along the marina or on Anse Mitan, a scruffy beach in the next cove. Creole restaurants here are noted for *crabes farcis* (a highly seasoned blend of land crab and bread crumbs baked in the shell), *boudin* (dark blood sausage), *langouste* (rock lobster), and *blaff* (a succulent fish stew supposedly named for the sound the fish makes when plopped into simmering water).

Sugar cane was king when Marie-Josephe Rose Tascher was born here in 1763 on her parents' plantation, La Pagerie. Ruins of the chimney and of the walls of a "purgerie," where slaves tended huge kettles of boiling sugar syrup, are on the entrance road just past the botanical garden. What is left of the family home, the former kitchen, has been turned into a museum dedicated to Marie-Josephe and her second husband, Napoleon Bonaparte.

At 16 she had married the governor's son, gone off to Paris with him, and borne a daughter who became queen of Holland and a son who became viceroy of Italy. Her husband was guillotined during the French Revolution, and then she met the Corsican. He called her his Josephine, and their passionate marriage lasted from 1796 to 1809.

Truman Capote mentions visiting La Pagerie in the lead story of *Music for Chameleons*. Capote stayed at La Bateliere during Carnival, which he as a New Orleans native found surprisingly vital, spontaneous, and vivid, like a "bomb explosion in a fireworks factory."

One visitor who almost never left was Paul Gauguin. For four months in 1887 he painted beach scenes and the vivacious life of St. Pierre. Gauguin fell in love not only with the island—"the richest of nature," he wrote—but with the people, in particular the dark-skinned women.

A few years later, St. Pierre vanished in an instant. There had been rumblings up on Mount Pelée, but they were ignored; an election was about to take place in the old capital, and its harbor as well was jammed with ships loading merchandise for France. When the 4,700-foot volcano erupted on May 8, 1902, the entire population of 29,000 and most of the ships were incinerated in three minutes. Only a prisoner in the town jail survived to tell the story. An American scientist later assembled the exhibits at the volcanological museum, which should begin your tour of this Caribbean Pompeii.

Driving along the coast north of Fort-de-France you can stop for a tasty Creole buffet lunch and a refreshing swim at the Latitude resort

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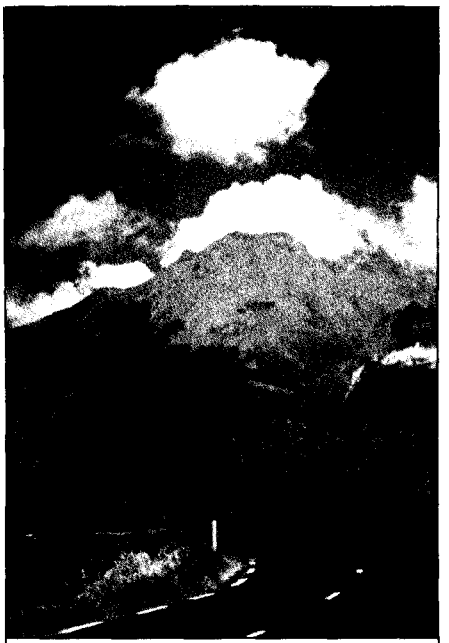

FRENCH WEST INDIES TOURIST BUREAU

A road winds along the coast.

in Le Carbet, site of Columbus' visit. About ten minutes farther, at Anse Turin, a tiny sign points to the unpaved entrance road of the Centre d'Art Musée Paul Gauguin. Passing under an old aqueduct arch you catch sight of three peaked roofs among the palms that look like the straw hats worn by local fishermen. Reproductions of Gauguin's paintings done near here look remarkably like things you've just passed: the grayish-sand beach and fishing boats, the women carrying baskets of fruit on their madras-covered heads.

Heading up into the hills from reborn St. Pierre, the scenic road does a series of hairpin bends through magnificent stands of bamboo, palm, and wild orchid. The air is noticeably cooler and fresher, tempting one to linger, but I have a rendezvous at Leyritz plantation with Charles and Yveline de Lucy de Fossarieu. Through their vision this remarkable eighteenth-century estate has been transformed into a modern resort. Despite such concessions to modern life as plumbing, air conditioning, a swimming pool, a solarium, and a tennis court, holidays here are like a journey into the past. Your bedroom in a former slave house has a four-poster and a comfortably furnished patio. Meals are served in an old granary, and the main house offers spacious lounges and a mahogany-paneled library. No wonder British author Barbara Cartland came here for romantic inspiration.

In the middle of the island is Caravelle peninsula, at the end of which are the ruins of Château Dubuc. It commands a harbor that was frequented by pirates and smugglers before it flourished during the colonial plantation era. A small museum gives no hint of what happened to Aimée Dubuc, born in 1776, who went to France for an education and was captured by pirates on her way back. After a series of unbelievable tribulations, she became Sultana Validé at the court of Abd-ul-Hamid, sultan of Turkey.

The beaches here are being developed as part of the island's park system. Yawl races are staged in August, and important schools for midshipmen and on marine aquiculture are nearby. If you'd like to explore this area, Hotel St. Aubin offers comfortable, modern accommodations in a Victorian plantation house set high on a ridge overlooking the sea. Unfortunately, the main coastal road winds through the property, but the view from your gingerbread-trimmed balcony more than compensates for the traffic noise. Owner Guy Foret restored this unique house and grows vegetables and fruit for his dining room on a hill behind the main building.

Rum and *Martinique* are synonymous for connoisseurs of the world's finest aged *rhum*. The Clément family has perfected the natural technique of *rhum agricole* at Domaine de l'Acajou. Now living at the old wooden mansion near the distillery is Georges-Louis Clément, who explains that their rum is the equivalent of an estate-bottled wine. As it is more like cognac, though, this aged-in-mahogany rum should be sipped neat from a snifter. While other islands' white rum comes from molasses, Clément distills directly from sugar-cane juice. Purchases can be made at the distillery or at the airport's duty-free shop, at half the U.S. price.

Beaches at the southern tip of the island offer an ideal finale for a tour. Ste. Anne has several outstanding resorts, among them the handsome Manoir de Beauregard. This eighteenth-century manor house is fitted out with antique four-posters in marble-floored rooms which open onto a hillside patio and swimming pool. Mme. Marcelle Saint-Cyr, the dignified proprietor, welcomes guests in an imposing hall which leads to a simple dining room. The kitchen turns out memorable Creole food made from the lambs and goats that roam the property.

Driving back to the airport, I think about Lillian Hellman, who paid some fishermen $35 to take her along for the experience of crashing through the surf in their *gommier* boat, a craft cut from a single gum tree. She describes the people as exceptionally good-looking: "The French of the island, even the pure blacks, offer the explanation of miscegenation." Hellman concludes that Senegalese roots account for the attractiveness of these small-boned, strong-looking folk.

And their joie de vivre? You don't have to speak much French to appreciate what makes Martinique different from France. Just enjoy. ■

TRAVEL FACTS

The French West Indies Tourist Board, 610 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10020, can supply lists of hotels and their U.S. representatives as well as maps and free brochures. In Fort-de-France, the Office Departmental du Tourisme has a well-staffed information bureau on the waterfront close to the ferry landing at La Savane; they can arrange contacts for hiking and camping, and rental of private villas. The Martinique Center organizes cultural activities, including exhibits, concerts, a guitar festival, and this December a two-week international jazz festival. Hotels offer special "Season of Sweet Savings" reductions of up to fifty-five percent until mid-December.

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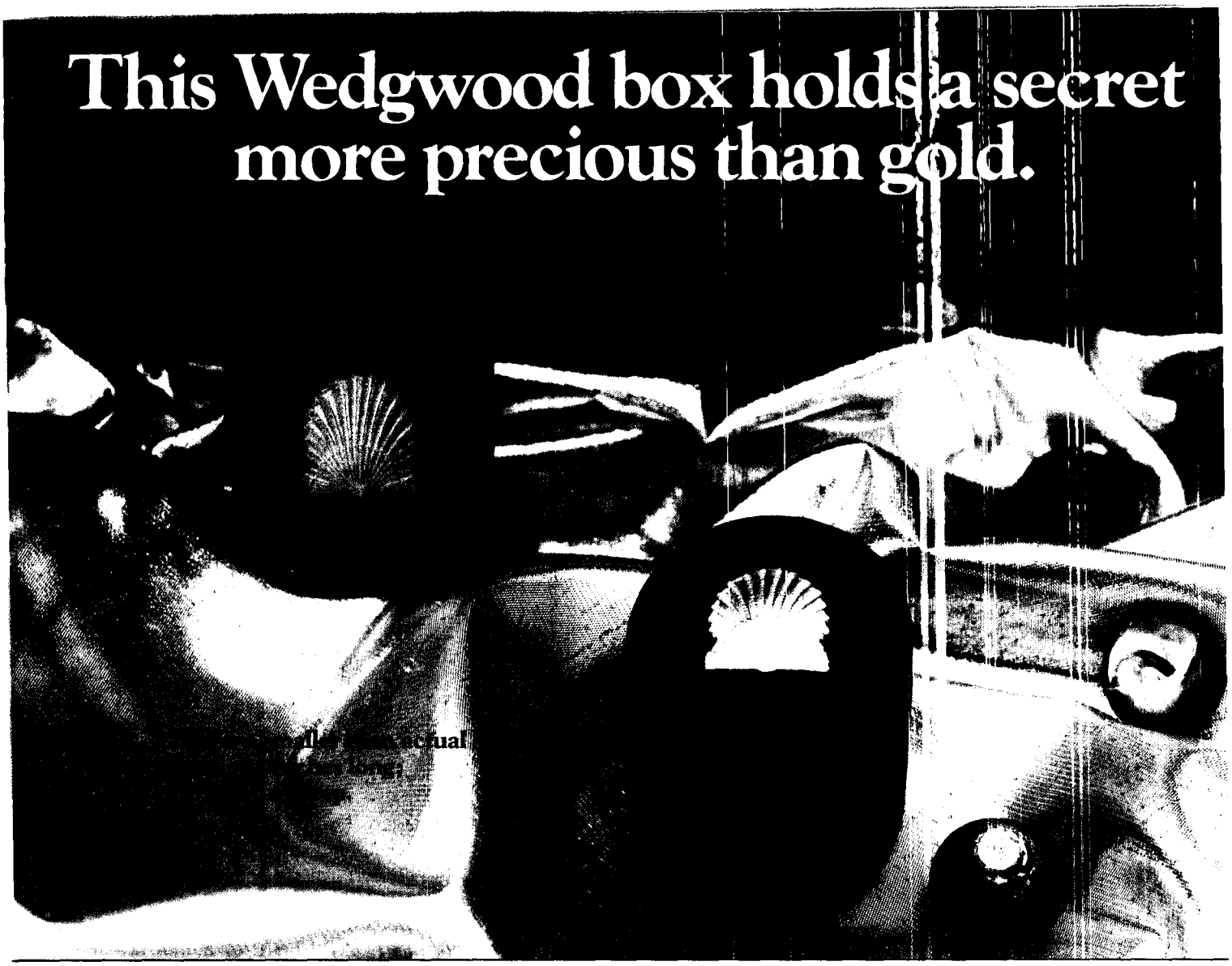

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MUSIC

Linda Sanders

A Measure of Wagner

This Wagner year has so far been marked by a number of significant productions of the composer's mature works. In July we were offered a different view when the Waterloo Festival in New Jersey presented his early opera *Das Liebesverbot oder Die Novize von Palermo (The Ban on Love or The Novice of Palermo)*. Conducted by the festival's music director, Gerard Schwarz, this concert performance was the first ever in this country, a circumstance that was slightly less odd than it sounds. In the *New Grove Dictionary*, *Das Liebesverbot* is lumped together with Wagner's two earlier efforts, the unfinished *Die Hochzeit (The Wedding)* and *Die Feen (The Fairies)*, as "an embarrassment to Wagner enthusiasts, not because of technical deficiencies that could be excused on the grounds of his youth, but because they seem as routine as they are derivative." Wagner scholar Ernest Newman, on the other hand, claimed that "*Das Liebesverbot*, like *Die Feen*, is a work upon which Wagnerian criticism will always look with an affectionate eye," on the grounds that it contains glimmers of the "coming dramatist in music." In other words, whether *Das Liebesverbot* inspires affection or embarrassment, it is considered a good candidate for obscurity.

Is it really that minor? Of course; but it's also great fun, and that, one suspects, is chiefly why it has been so rarely performed and has been skimmed over in Wagner studies. Written in what Newman twinklingly called the "wild days of 1834-36," *Das Liebesverbot* is the product of a young Wagner who drank too much, gambled, fooled around, and subscribed to the ideals of the so-called "Young Germany" movement, which rejected the old-fashioned values of German art in favor of a new cultural consciousness incorporating the best of Italian and French work. Works by such composers as Bellini, Rossini, Auber, and Meyerbeer served as the models for *Das Liebesverbot*. The source of Wagner's libretto is Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, but the temperature of his fidelity to the original is not terribly high.

As in *Measure for Measure* the story concerns a city in the hands of a prudish regent who makes all lovemaking outside marriage illegal and punishable by death. Wagner changes the setting from Vienna to Palermo, Sicily, so that he can contrast the hot-blooded, fun-loving Sicilians with frigid, Germanic Friedrich, the regent. Shakespeare's busy, manipulative Duke is nonexistent; the plot spins itself, with most of the chicanery coming from a pluckier Isabella, whose brother Claudio is the first to be sentenced to death under the harsh new law. When icy Friedrich reveals himself as a sexual hysteric by promising to spare her brother if only she'll have sex with him, it is Isabella who arranges to trick him by substituting Mariana, his abandoned wife, for herself at the tryst. Wagner makes a carnival the setting for his denouement, which gives him opportunities for both masked shenanigans and incorrigible Sicilian revelry before Friedrich's hypocrisy is revealed and all the pairs of lovers united.

While the score of *Das Liebesverbot* has been criticized as derivative, it has too much brio to be a genuinely bad opera. The overture is as energetically silly as one could wish in an *opera buffa*, decorated with castanets that naively announce the locale, and followed by a chaotic opening crowd scene. A potpourri of notable moments follows: a florid duet for two sopranos that summons up Bellini without rivaling him; a set piece for the comic character Brighella that employs the textual and rhythmic oddities that even today pass for comedy in Broadway specialty numbers; and an expressive second act orchestral prelude that aptly recalls an earlier theme and that has been pointed to as an incipient instance of Wagner's leitmotif system.

For the Waterloo performance, Roger Roloff as Friedrich and Alessandra Marc as Mariana lent importance to their big moments with fine singing. For the most part the relatively young Waterloo cast rendered the score honorably, in a concert performance with "suggested" staging. Notable were Donald Grobe as the cutup Luzio and Margaret Chalker's admirably sung Dorella. The one rather serious exception was the central role of Isabella as sung by Jeanne Distell, who was not at all in good voice, with the result that some of her scenes bordered on incoherence. Conductor Schwarz kept the orchestra on track and sounding good, in spite of the less than ideal acoustics of the Waterloo tent.

Even if *Das Liebesverbot* were less entertaining than it is, it would still be worth knowing. For one thing, it is interesting to see how soon Wagner had established a theme so fundamental to his later work: how many of his operas *don't* have some version of a "ban on love" at their core? And in terms of the lingering idolatry that has traditionally inhibited a reasonable view of Wagner and his music, *Das Liebesverbot* is useful as a lesson in perspective. That this rather skillful but unprepossessing work is the product of two of our greatest artists, Shakespeare and Wagner, is a circumstance too droll to be overlooked. ■

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William Cole

An Armful of Warm Books

Poems Personal and Accessible

Samuel Hazo is an assiduous worker in the poetry vineyard. He's the director of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh and teaches English at Duquesne University. He's been a translator and a novelist, wrote a book about Hart Crane, and now appears with a selection from his eight previous books of poetry, *Thank a Bored Angel* (New Directions, cloth $14, paper $6.25). For the most part, very personal and accessible poems about his family, his teaching, and his travels. There is one little poem I was pleased to come across again; I'd used it in one of my anthologies. It's *God and Man:*

After casting the first act, checking sections
of scenery and mastering his rage
because the female lead blundered on page
one, he left the actors to themselves on stage
without a script and fretting for directions.

Rompish

People who use first initials along with full middle names make me suspicious. I mean, hiding behind J. Heatherington Smith is really Joe Smith. So when stories began appearing in *Paris Review* by T. Coraghessan Boyle, I thought, "Who is this Tom Boyle and what's he coraghessing about?" Well, he's a *real* writer, and his novel *Water Music* has just come out in paper from Penguin for $6.95. Nothing much happened when it appeared in hardbound a few years ago, which is a pity, for it's a wild and wonderful book. Among many other things, it's a fictionalization of the life of Mungo Park (1771-1806), the Scottish explorer who first traced the course of the Niger River. The scene shifts from London at the turn of the century, with public hangings, grave robbing, and prostitution, to Africa, with everything that nature can possibly throw at an invading white man: starvation, floods, horrifying diseases, fever, murder, ambush. Withal, a very funny book—funny because outrageous. Chapters have such titles as "Soft White Underbelly," "Not Twist, Not Copperfield, Not Fagin Himself," and most anachronistically, "Oh Mama, Can This Really Be The End?" Mungo, our hero, is a stuffy, determined blond giant, as thickheaded as they come. Among the villains is a really likable bad man, Ned Rise, hanged and risen from the dead. There are characters named Smurk and Crump, a beauty named Fatima weighing 460 pounds, a recipe for baked, stuffed camel and such vocabulary-stretching words as *remugient, testudineous, algolagniac,* and *solipedous.* The most rompish historical novel I've ever seen.

Wimpledon

What an unpleasant bunch the top tennis players are! Connors "shooting the umpire the *cornuto* sign, his index and little finger extended, accusing the official of wearing the horns of a cuckold"; Lendl, who "looked like he had spent the summer in a root cellar" and who will "treat everyone except his entourage with all the charm of a Stormtrooper"; and MacEnroe, who "responds to the most solicitous questions with the adenoidal whine of an adolescent being bugged about leaving his dirty clothes on the living-room floor." All quotes from *Short Circuit* by Michael Mewshaw (Atheneum, $13.95), a novelist who followed the men's professional tennis tour for six months. It's a shocking book, exposing how big money has corrupted the game—top players "tanking" matches, splitting prize money, taking drugs, and getting preferential treatment from umpires. The stars are really nothing but a bunch of spoiled kids, who know nothing about anything but tennis. But then, as Mewshaw points out, it isn't all beer and skittles: "Fatigue, boredom, nagging illness, homesickness, sophomoric humor. . . ." It's this kind of book: if you don't care about tennis, don't read it. If you *do* care, read it, but be prepared to be disenchanted. *Prime Time Tennis* (Scribner's, $14.95) by Vic Seixas —rhymes with *gracious*—is quite a different thing. A sort of "as told to" written with Joel Cohen, in which Seixas, an old-timer, rambles on about his days: Wimbledon, Forest Hills, tiny purses. Here are a few items I took from it: players in the old days didn't grunt; a kindly thing to say in doubles when your partner flubs an easy one is "You learned that shot from me"; and in the author's opinion, Don Budge was the greatest player of the past half-century.

Jokes, Jollities, and a Serious Edge

Recently, reading Trollope's autobiography, I came across the following: "A novel should give a picture of common life enlivened by humor and sweetened by pathos." So I applied this dictum to the new Peter De Vries, *Slouching Towards Kalamazoo* (Little, Brown, $13.95). A picture of common life? Indeed. North Dakota and Kalamazoo. Humor? Indeed, indeed. And pathos? How about a 15-year-old boy who gets his teacher pregnant? There's pathos for you. He sobs, "It's as though you're carrying my buh-buh-baby brother!" There are jokes and jollities galore, as with all De Vries novels, but a serious edge too; he's looking at various facets of American life in the Sixties, checking on the beginnings of the sexual

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revolution, on censorship, on the state of religion. His schoolteacher, Maggie Doubloon, starts the rage for T-shirts that bear a message, hers showing a large scarlet "A" followed by a plus sign. Always with this author, one wants to quote, quote, quote. A few: there's the minister who loses his faith because "he couldn't swallow the last supper." Another man is "a lapsed atheist." Then there's the "kind of girl a previous generation called stacked, but what we blades in Ulalume called a crate of melons."

In Defense of Rhetoric

Years ago Charles Morton in *The Atlantic* used to have fun with what he dubbed "The Elongated Yellow Fruit Department." This roundabout way of referring to a banana is known in Latin as "periphrasis," I learn from Willard R. Espy's latest, *The Garden of Eloquence: A Rhetorical Bestiary* (Harper & Row, $16.95). We all know about such obvious figures of speech as metaphor, ambiguity, and irony, but how about "epanalepsis," an example of which is Voltaire's "Common sense is not so common," or "curtatio," exampled by Topsy's "I 'spect I growed," or "synecdoche" (pronounced something like the city in New York State), such as calling Durante "the Schnoz" or Durocher "the Lip." Espy's introduction is a defense of rhetoric, which has had a bad name for a couple of hundred years, but which one dictionary defines as "a skillful or artistic use of speech." Each figure of speech is accompanied by its pronunciation, examples of usage, and frequently by an illustrative verse by the author.

Beyond the Neon

Birdbrains! Everybody in Larry McMurtry's novel *The Desert Rose* (Simon & Schuster, $14.95) is truly dumb. Not least of all his heroine, Harmony, an aging topless dancer with a heart of gold, whose beauty is drooping. "That's the nice thing about Vegas, though. . . . I was just pretty. Nobody would have known what to do with me anywhere else, but here I got to be a feathered beauty." Harmony has a gorgeous 16-year-old daughter, Pepper, who ignores her and who inevitably takes her place in the big show on the Strip. There's a cast of a half-dozen other dimwits, and I guess it's good to know how simple folks live in the jerrybuilt shacks out beyond the neon, but somehow I don't really give a darn about a bunch of people whose brains would not overflow a teaspoon. But McMurtry does move things right along, and he has a perfect ear for American dialect.

Elegant, Old-Fashioned

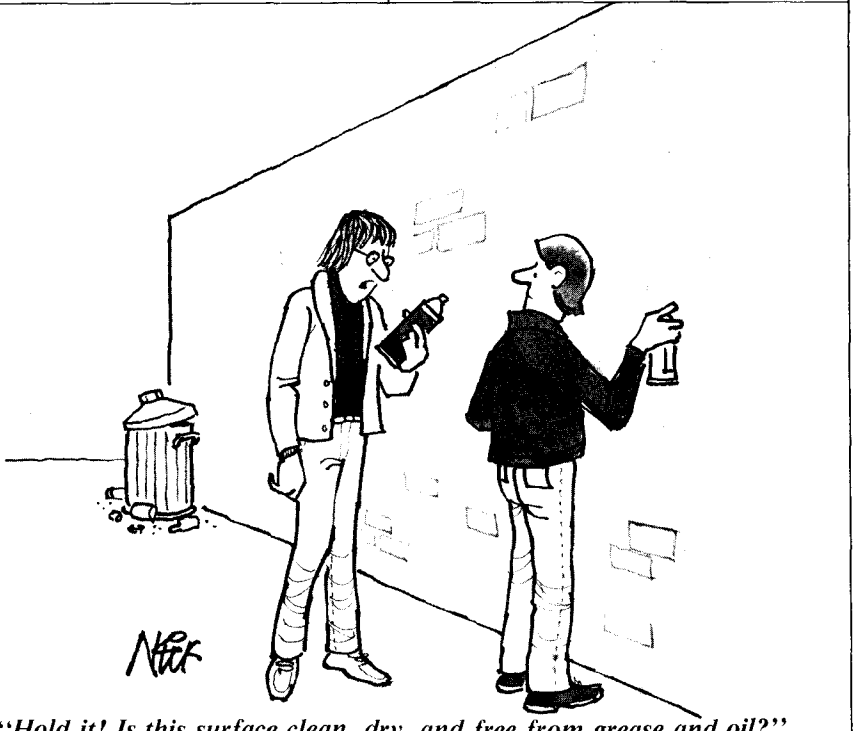
If you're looking for something truly unusual in a novel, pick up the paperbound of the delightfully titled *An Armful of Warm Girl* by W.M. Spackman (Van Vactor & Goodheart/Persea, $5.95) or his new hardbound, *A Difference of Design* (Alfred A. Knopf, $10.95). Spackman, who must be in his late seventies, writes an elegant, old-fashioned prose, with sentences that aren't always crystal-clear at first reading. Take this, about a couple dancing, from *Difference:*

> "Because what I seem to be trying to you know make up my mind about," she told him, as they turned, "is *are* you more what I wondered whether you mightn't turn out to be than I'd expected I'd think."

It's a short novel reworking the theme of James' *The Ambassadors:* rich American mother sends trusted emissary to France to rescue her son from the clutches of a jezebel. Emissary falls for the jezebel, really a charming countess, and at the same time for a smart American divorcee.

More than Thrills

It's fun to read an occasional thriller-chiller. I make stabs at some of them, and read a few through with pleasure. Two this session: Robert Daley's *The Dangerous Edge* (Simon & Schuster, $16.95) is a caper novel about a gigantic bank heist, of the Banque de Nice et la Cote d'Azur, executed under the leadership of "the Brain," an American psychopath. Daley, a cop expert who wrote *The Prince of the City*, is a marvelous observer: "The nationality of any man in Europe could be determined by his clothing, by his haircut, and by his jewelry or lack of it." The other goody is *A Cold Mind* by David L. Lindsey (Harper & Row, $13.95), which takes place in Houston, where suddenly there's a rash of exotic deaths among the high-class prostitutes. How come? Why do they foam at the mouth and run amok? Aha! Homicide detective Stuart Haydon checks into it, using computers, the latest in forensic medicine, and common sense. As with the Daley novel, the reader gets a lot more than just thrills and chills. ■



"Hold it! Is this surface clean, dry, and free from grease and oil?"

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Stanley Kauffmann

More Trick than Tragedy

If the hoopla about Marsha Norman's new play were credible, the current state of American drama would be better than it is. *'night, Mother* has lately been garlanded with a Pulitzer after lusty cheering by many critics. Because the play has only two characters, is in one long act, and ends with a death, some commentators have called it classical and have invoked Aristotle. I envy their rapture; the play itself keeps me from sharing it. *'night, Mother* is certainly better written and constructed than Norman's last New York production, *Getting Out,* but like that earlier play, the new one is fundamentally a stunt. Moreover, I think it has been misconstrued by most who have written about it, and apparently by the author herself.

RICHARD FELDMAN

Kathy Bates and Anne Pitoniak in Marsha Norman's *'night, Mother.*

Getting Out, which was done off-Broadway in 1979, dealt with an unruly Southern girl, her troubles with the law, and her struggle for rehabilitation after prison. The protagonist was shown at two ages, teens and twenties, and was played by two actresses. This tired ingenuity, which was embossed with tired candor, camouflaged the fact that the play was only a gussied-up rehash of a 1930s Girls-in-the-Big-House movie. Inarguably *'night, Mother* addresses deeper themes, is less flashy, and has a number of sharp lines; nonetheless it too is a device, a stunt, and not an authentic drama; and it fails at being even the drama that it claims to be.

The play *seems* to be about a woman in her thirties for whom life has lost savor and point and who decides to make a quick exit with one bullet: it seems to be a drama of the courage to face nullity, to recognize and reject it. Jessie is a plump, divorced country woman who lives with her widowed mother in the family home. (The dead father/husband was a hardworking farmer. Norman never explains how he left enough money, insurance or otherwise, for these two women to live on without worries.) At the moment that the play begins, Jessie comes into the parlor-and-kitchen set carrying a beach towel and asks her mother whether there's a sheet of plastic around. The question is matter-of-fact, as is her question about where Daddy's gun is. She climbs to the attic, gets the pistol, and announces as she cleans it that she is going to kill herself. At the end of an hour and a half, by the clock on the wall crammed with doodads, she goes into the bedroom, locks the door, and does it. (The play could have used the same title as the last Norman work.)

After Jessie's calm announcement of intent, her mother, Thelma, goes through recurring stages of disbelief, fright, panic, near-petulance, near-acceptance, and dismay. Jessie just plows ahead through the last ninety minutes of her life, occasionally pierced by stabs of feeling, but mostly making careful preparations or informing Thelma of preparations already made, including much trivia about deliveries of groceries, milk, and candy.

The trivia are used as light background for the dark matters that are revealed. Jessie has been divorced by the husband she still loves; her teenage son is a thief and drug addict living on the loose; she has epilepsy, as her father had. She has had a year's remission of the illness, which apparently is meant to underscore that she is not committing suicide to escape it. Nor is she killing herself because of any other circumstance of her life that we learn about. Why, then, is she doing it? She is empty. She has been waiting for herself all these years, and "'I' never got here." Her life is so unvaryingly flavorless that, she says, death will only be like getting off a bus fifty blocks before the end of the line. She is quitting life fifty years before the

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end because she will be in the same "place" then as she is now.

Despite her mother's increasing terror, Jessie is obdurate. "You are my child!" cries Thelma. "No," Jessie replies, "I am what became of your child." At the last, a self-determined last, she tears herself from her mother's grasp, goes into the bedroom, locks the door so that Thelma can't be suspected of murdering her, and after a moment, shoots.

Ostensibly we have been watching the last moments of a present-day spiritual aristocrat, a woman who can look on life and death with a judicious eye and can choose courageously, a woman who recognizes desolation and declines to be humiliated by it even if her choice costs her life. But is that really what we have seen?

How can we accept Jessie's statements about herself: accept her condition of emancipated despair? If these things were true, what possible reason would she have to *announce* her decision, then put her mother through those ninety minutes? She says she is doing it to spare Thelma the pain of discovery after the event. Is this a rational way to spare another person pain: to subject her mother to these ninety minutes and leave her with a memory of them in *addition* to the suicide? Could a nobly philosophic, privately resolved Jessie really come in calmly with that blanket, calmly ask for a plastic sheet and a pistol, and calmly sit there cleaning the pistol in front of her mother?

In reality, we are watching an act of vengeance. Jessie is not, as implied, our vicar in a Slough of Despond that possibly threatens us all. Jessie is a case. She is a woman haunted by an illness that may recur, a woman parted from the husband she loves because, she says, he asked her to choose between him and smoking! As for her relationship with her mother, Thelma says she got tired of watching Jessie and her father, whom Jessie loved, "going on and off like electric lights" because of their illness. This is the same Thelma who walked away from her husband's deathbed to watch *Gunsmoke* because he wouldn't talk to her.

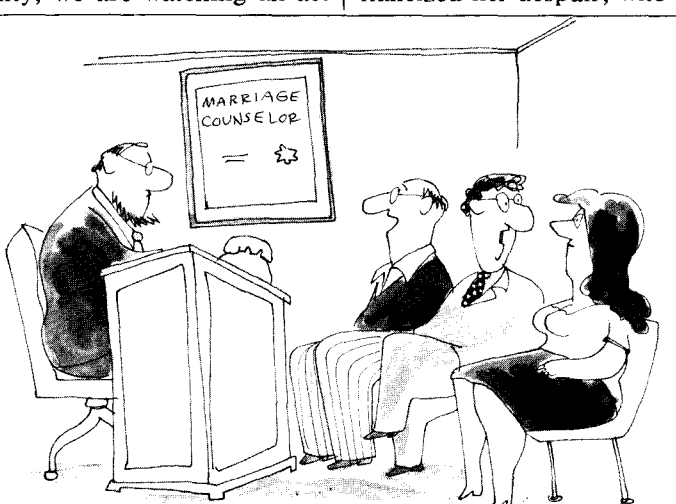
> We are watching an act of vengeance.

Add up all these elements, and Jessie stands clear as a vengeful neurotic, not a tragic heroine. It's a truism that suicides are committed *at* someone, and this play, intentionally or not, dramatizes it. Jessie's last utterance, which is the title of the work, is the last twist of the knife. Instead of a woman quietly exalted by her ultra-rational choice and by her will to carry it out, we see a woman deceptively serene (as serenity often is), whose life has been made impossible by ill luck and warped values, whose buried hatred for her mother has italicized her despair, who is bent on suicide, and who comes in to torture her mother for ninety minutes before doing it. That grim, twisted Jessie is latent in the script, of course, or she couldn't be perceived; but Norman, deliberately or unwittingly, has chosen to present Jessie as a rustic female samurai who speaks implicitly to the residual nobility in us all.

Thelma, too, is contradictorily drawn. From Moment One she is almost a caricature of a self-centered old baby, with no more brain than she needs to make hot chocolate and watch TV. And what does this silly old woman do when she hears her daughter's suicide plan? She plunges into deterrent chat, in domestic light-comedy style. Instead of the hysteria we might expect from this dodo, instead of the screaming or fainting or struggle or even a transparent ruse to get the gun, she casts herself as a partner in a "clever" cat-and-mouse duet, as if she were accustomed to such crises and were competent to handle them. When she sees deterrence failing, she thinks more of the threat to herself than to Jessie, of the disturbance of her cozy life, and in childish pique she makes a mess—she throws pots on the floor. Thelma's actions result not from the complexity of a character, but from the traffic-management of a character by its author to make the play possible.

That is the pervasive flaw of the whole play: manipulation. To put it another way, if the play were true—true to Norman's characters as she wants us to think of them—it wouldn't exist. Either Jessie would shoot herself before it begins, or, as soon as she discloses her plans, Thelma would collapse. Thus, though *'night, Mother* is more subtle than *Getting Out*, it is at bottom equally a stunt, a contrivance, and the author's tyrannical governance of characters in order to flesh out a gimmicky framework: the suicide announcement at the start and the pistol shot at the finish.

Thelma's one impeccable line comes right after the shot. Against the locked bedroom door she sobs: "Forgive me. I thought you were mine." The drama that really leads to that line—of a clawing Electra complex, of the mother's mirror-image hatreds, and of the pity overarching both—has not been written. ■



"My wife doesn't understand me." *"Mi esposa no me comprende."*

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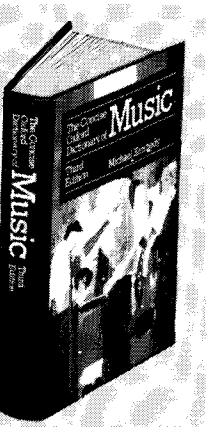

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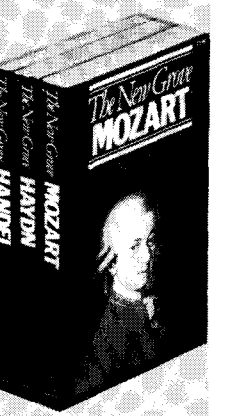

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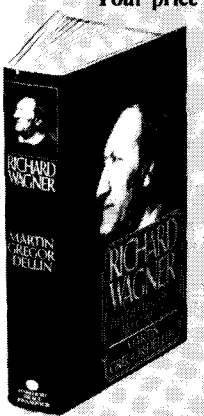

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Gregory Sandow

Satiety

Lately I've heard all Mozart's symphonies, played on instruments of his time by Britain's leading early music ensemble, the Academy of Ancient Music. Should you hear them, too?

Yes—but not *all* of them. There are more than you might think: more than the forty-one recognized by the obsolete numbering introduced in 1862 and still in use, more even than the fifty offered years ago on the Philips label. Counting pieces that Mozart himself adapted from orchestral serenades or opera overtures, there are actually *sixty-five* symphonies, ten written before Mozart was 12, and thirty before he was 16. Those youthful works are miracles, but not because the 8-year-old Mozart wrote masterworks. When he was 8 he wrote only as well as a competent adult of his time, which was still miraculous, but it means that a twenty-three-record trek through all his symphonies gets off to a tedious start. It's no great fun to hear more than two dozen faceless if energetic samples of a genre that, as British musicologist Neal Zaslaw says in his exhausting notes, was meant in those pre-Beethoven days to be charming but hardly profound.

There *are* rewards, though—at least of a sort—if you plod through all sixty-five. (They're in seven boxed sets of three or four records each: L'OISEAU LYRE D167D3, D168D3, D169D3, D170D3, D171D4, D172D4, and D173D3.) You'll hear two versions of several works: the great G minor symphony with and without clarinets, for instance, or the very early Symphony in D major, K. 45. You'll hear orchestras both large and small; the size of each embodies Zaslaw's best guess about how many musicians were available to play the work at its first performance. You can guess which symphonies might not be by Mozart at all; in this you can second-guess Zaslaw who, faced with two disputed manuscripts of which only one is by Mozart, made his choice and then reversed himself after the record was made, confessing in his notes that he now thinks he made a mistake.

The seven volumes don't quite run chronologically. Instead they're arranged by a combination of chronology and place; this is useful for recording, in that all symphonies written for one city are recorded with the same forces, but it's hard for listening. Also confusing are the Koechel numbers, which place the symphonies in the full chronology of all Mozart's work. Revisions in the Koechel catalogue cause many Mozart works to bear two numbers, one real, the other a parenthetical ghost; even if you know that, you won't be prepared for the combination of appendices and second thoughts that give an innocent symphony in B flat the monstrous, unexplained Koechel listing of—get this—AC11.03(A216)(K3 = 74g).

Like a historian interested in the strategy of war but not in its pain, Zaslaw talks—usefully, I'll admit—about manuscripts, dates, and the forms and musical customs of Mozart's time, without saying much about whatever it is that makes us love Mozart enough to care. He misses two great changes, or rather two great tidal waves that swept through Mozart's work. When Mozart was 15, more or less at puberty, his music got more personal and more inventive. By the time he was 20, when he'd grown up, his work was wholly his own. Zaslaw doesn't notice. Significantly, neither does the Academy of Ancient Music.

These performances aren't "conducted," as we now understand a conductor's work; instead they're led jointly from the keyboard by Christopher Hogwood and from the concertmaster's chair by Jaap Schroeder. The early instruments, combined with early playing technique and a native's command of eighteenth-century musical speech, make the early symphonies brisk, light, and clear. Everyone should hear these records, if only for their eighteenth-century orchestral sound, the sound Mozart himself had in mind when he composed and which, other things being equal, I believe his music should have. Performances on modern instruments sound murky to me now.

Because there's no conductor, there's no real tone, or at any rate not enough variety of tone. The problem isn't just that there is no conductor. There's a wrong ideology too, a conviction that Mozart's symphonies, especially the great ones, must be saved from generations of romanticism and played, as Zaslaw says, with a "more objective, 18th century point of view"—even though he admits that the later symphonies have greater "artistic depth." In the puberty symphonies of Volume III, you'll find the best balance of good music and good performance. From the late symphonies in Volume VI, I learned to my surprise that Mozart was more romantic than I'd thought, or at least more of a maverick and less a man of his time. The Academy of Ancient Music understands his time, but not him. They play the early symphonies well, since those are built from stock eighteenth-century musical ideas; their "objective, 18th century point of view" all but kills the late symphonies, where Mozart speaks for himself. ■

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LANGUAGE

Thomas H. Middleton

The Same Old Crisis

To hear some of the recent pronouncements from Washington, you'd think we'd just discovered that we had big trouble in American education. It has been almost thirty years since Rudolf Flesch wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read*, a controversial book that clearly stated that something was wrong with the way a great many children were being taught to read. We've known for a long time now that students were graduating from high school without being able to read anything more complicated than a rock-concert ticket stub. Yet, suddenly our president and a raft of presidential aspirants are shouting, "Holy Mackerel! Look at this mess!"

The mess has many more ingredients than a distressingly widespread inability to read. For a couple of decades, we've been buffeted and tossed by a stormy sea of "ya know," "like I mean," and "wow!" There's one basic reason for "ya know," which is that the speaker is unable to express himself in the language of articulate human beings, so he tells you that you know his meaning without his having to express it. That you might not have the vaguest idea of what he means is beside the point. The point is that he himself probably doesn't know what he means. There's a line I value: "How do I know what I think until I've put it in writing?" One whose skill with words is minimal will probably not know precisely what it is he means beyond a range of feelings: well-being, ill-being, joy, resentment, envy, anger—that sort of thing. If words were important to him, and if he had learned how to string them together in comprehensible fashion, it would be a safe bet that he'd say what he meant and would not have to say "you know"; you really would know.

It is absurd to blame the sorry state of linguistic skills among our youth entirely, or even mostly, on the educators. Still, they are not entirely blameless. The problem probably started, at least in part, with the great modern interest in the admittedly important study of linguistics. Linguistics deals principally with spoken language, as opposed to written language. Unfortunately, some linguists went overboard and made the outrageous claim that written language isn't language. Only spoken language counts. Thus, the National Council of Teachers of English has given full endorsement to this credo:

1. Language changes constantly.
2. Change is normal.
3. Spoken language is the language.
4. Correctness rests upon usage.
5. All usage is relative.

I'm sure we all accept numbers one and two without question. Number three, however, must give us pause. The only reason I can think of for saying, "Spoken language is the language" is to make a point of the corollary, "Written language is *not* the language." (Numbers four and five are so vague as to be quite meaningless.)

What happened—and this came to me as a shocking discovery about ten years ago—was that vast numbers of educators leapt gleefully on statements one and two as though they were revolutionary insights. Most of us have known for most of our lives that language changes and that change is normal. We've also known that everyone dies and death is normal and that old age brings wrinkles and sagging muscles. So we try to stay in good physical condition, knowing that we must sooner or later succumb; and those of us who love the language often speak out and write in a largely futile attempt to guide the inevitable changes in more or less sensible directions.

Not so the National Council of Teachers of English. Their upper echelons decided that, since language changes and the written language isn't really the language anyway, well, Halleluiah! the study of English as a discipline was not merely unnecessary, but it crippled creativity; it was "elitist"; and it produced a poor self-image in youngsters who had problems with it.

The conspicuously predictable result has been millions of young Americans who can't write. Since they can't "put it in writing," they know only vaguely what they think, and their thinking is limited largely to feeling, scheming, and remembering what's been "coming down" lately.

I've spoken and corresponded with many teachers who have long deplored the direction of the NCTE. They've been hanging on the ropes while trying to defend more traditional positions, but they're losing ground in what seems a hopeless cause. Who knows? Maybe now that the alarm has been sounded in Washington and carried from there to the major media, things might change. I wouldn't stake my bankroll on it, though.

I have of necessity oversimplified. If you'd like a more fleshed-out story, and if you're interested in reading some fascinating accounts of how and where the roots of the mess found fertile ground and flourished, I suggest that you read *Less than Words Can Say* and *The Graves of Academe* by Richard Mitchell (Little, Brown) and *What's Happening to American English?* by Arn Tibbetts and Charlene Tibbetts (Scribners). I think you'll enjoy them. ■

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BOOKS

A Personal Laboratory

The Healing Heart: Antidotes to Panic and Helplessness
by Norman Cousins, W.W. Norton, 288 pp., $13.95
Reviewed by Joel Elkes, M.D.

"I HAVE ALREADY lived more than an average lifetime, but I want to continue to live long enough to see the establishment of a world under law and a planet made safe and fit for human habitation," said Norman Cousins, and he intends to keep his word. Cousins has traveled extensively and has met the leaders of his age, at times carrying critical messages on matters of public policy. To a devoted worldwide public he has brought his vision, clarity, and courage through his editorials for *Saturday Review*. (I wish the collection of these editorials would be reprinted; *Present Tense* leaves the reader breathless with the scope and depth of his energy and enterprise.) His efforts exacted a price. In 1964 he was incapacitated by an illness affecting his muscles and joints. Fierce pain and a guarded prognosis by his physician forced him to turn inward. He mobilized himself and his friends and called in King Mirth. The story of his recovery, as told to an astonished public in a famous article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and subsequently in his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, is history.

In 1978 Cousins accepted a distinguished teaching post at UCLA. Success pursued him: overcrowded speaking schedules, traffic, queueing, carrying luggage, no regular exercise, broken routines. Again his body reacted. On December 22, 1980, he suffered a massive heart attack. *The Healing Heart* recounts his recovery and the growth of a partnership between patient and physician. It extends an important message to patients and to medicine.

Norman Cousins.

Shortly after his attack, Cousins is wheeled into UCLA's Intensive Care Unit. Reading apprehension on the faces of Dean Mellinkoff and others there, he informs them in a clear voice that they are "looking at what is probably the darndest healing machine that has ever been wheeled into the hospital." During his first night among the ticking machines of the ICU, he wonders the obvious. Other thoughts come too: "Have I told those I love that I love them?" He remembers his father's last days. He dares not close his eyes for fear of exit. Then he laughs at his panic, asking himself what "a walking health exhibit like me is doing in an ICU?" He snaps on the TV, and makes it through the night. He has confronted the panic and begun a process of "taking charge."

There is no doubt about the diagnosis. Tests and symptoms indicate extensive damage to the heart wall. As before, Cousins makes his body a personal laboratory and befriends the society within his skin. He refuses morphine; he asks for a change in the visiting routine to ensure rest. Gradually he improves. Later he wears a portable monitor and is encouraged by its readings. But then come the treadmill tests. He is "scared stiff" at *being* exercised, at an accelerating pace, on a moving band over which he has no control. He tries to suppress his fear, but fails and has to stop. He tries again and cannot manage. The tests show beyond doubt the existence of atherosclerotic blockage. He accepts this finding, but inquires whether fear could not contribute to coronary spasm by further narrowing the flow

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through a partly obstructed artery. He finds evidence for this in the literature and takes it up with his physician. When Dr. Shine suggests an angiogram, which to Cousins carries the prospect of bypass surgery, Cousins has his doubts.

Their discussions are poignant and extraordinarily moving in this search for personal truth. Physician and patient, friend and friend, move from their respective terrains of experience to the common ground of trust. Cousins again reads the literature on bypass surgery and the remarkable relief it affords in cases with severe pain. He notes that his pain is intermittent and highly susceptible to emotional influence. Dr. Shine again recommends angiography, but suggests that Cousins receive a second opinion. Cousins consults Dr. Cannom and decides to follow his own route. He establishes a disciplined routine to exercise and nourish his body, mind, and spirit. He walks; he eats the delicious salad meals set before him by his wife, Ellen; he returns to golf and tennis, music and photography. He ensures "time-out" and keeps his schedule rigidly within bounds. He embarks upon the construction of a separate study-library to house his papers and books. The beautiful circular structure stands on a hill for a reason other than the view: it forces him to climb the steps twice a day to get his reward.

His recovery is striking. Within six months he ventures onto the treadmill again, but on his own terms. He asks to be given control of the speed of the moving platform; to lift his spirits he brings tapes of the Bach Toccata and, for good measure, of Woody Allen. This time he passes the test.

He returns to his work, particularly his programs for cancer patients ("We Can Do") and for heart patients (CHEER), which include listening, sharing with the staff, and monitoring of the inner laboratory.

On the anniversary of his heart attack his colleagues plan a surprise party at his home. The prankster in him returns the compliment. He has Universal Studios make him up so that even his wife does not recognize the distinguished, bearded visitor at the door inquiring after Mr. Cousins. When the guests are assembled, the visitor strikes out on the organ. His daughter in the kitchen shrieks with the delight of recognition: "Daddy is home!"

This bare outline cannot remotely convey the warmth, humanity, and wisdom of this book. In telling his tale, Cousins educates. In sharing his feelings of helplessness, fear, and panic, he strikes at universals in us all. The book is about awareness, listening, trust, choice, and intention, and about the intelligent use of a benevolent, centering will. It is about communication and partnership between the healer and the healed. It addresses as complementary the art of medicine and the science of medicine, the person and the institution, and freedom of choice and professional responsibility. It affirms hope and belief as biologically constructive forces: not as blind faith, but as belief guided by knowledge and tempered by reason. It asserts that the quality of a person's life is the sum of the quality of his days.

At the core of the narrative is Cousins' relationship with himself and with his physicians. In their respective afterwords, his physicians—Drs. Shine, Hitzig, Cannom, and Fareed—attest to his extraordinary degree of acceptance and his willingness to communicate.

Words are medicine. According to Cousins, "It is not *whether* to tell the truth, but *how* to tell the truth that matters." Words do not figure in the pharmacopoeia, but as Dr. Lown points out in his splendid introduction, they can heal, maim, or kill. Good physicians, wherever they work, still take time to explain, explore, and reassure. Admittedly, this becomes harder as the health industry moves into higher gear. Yet, here the industry itself faces a strange and stubborn paradox that may well presage profound shifts.

The pattern of disease has changed radically over the past fifty years. The killers and maimers of old—diphtheria, typhoid, cholera, and polio—have been replaced by heart disease, hypertension, cancer, and stroke, with the mood and mental disorders following closely. There is strong suspicion that some may be "stress-related." Indeed, life itself —that is, our mode of life—may well emerge as the major pathogen in the Western world. Behavior can maim and probably kill.

The public may be more ready for this prognosis than the professionals. "Stress Management" is a brisk business, and shelf upon shelf of self-help books attest to a hunger for useful information. As Cousins points out, consumerism has reached medicine, and the public is going to medical school. The sad thing is that much of this information is biased, patchy, wrong, or plain dotty, and is purveyed for less-than-pure motives.

This new body of knowledge is lessening the contradiction of soma and symbol, or body and mind. The society within the skin is emerging as a magnificently coordinated system of communication, exquisitely in touch with the environment without. This communication is chemically mediated. The structure of many of the mediators (neurotransmitters, neuromodulators, encephalins, hormones) is known. The brain is a regionally organized organ of communication. It is also an awesomely endowed endocrine gland, harboring a still poorly understood "inner pharmacy" capable of affecting basic sensations like pain and other key regulatory processes; the placebo effect may well have chemical correlates. The brain interacts with the body's defense system, the immune system, which is influenced profoundly by mental events and social circumstances. Neuropsychoimmunology has all the excitement in 1983 that psychopharmacology had thirty years ago. Biofeedback has provided understanding of the voluntary control of involuntary processes. Advances in cognitive psychology suggest that it is not events, but our perception of events, that influences outcome—a sort of theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy. There are deep metabolic and hormonal shifts during states of relaxation and meditation. We are beginning to see the first outlines of a biology of loneliness and loss, and a biology of hope, intention, expectation, and belief—all old friends of *Homo sapiens*. When the place of behavior in medical practice and prevention is fully recognized, the effect may be comparable to the advent of antibiotics.

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This is a story about self-communication and other-communication, from a master communicator. In a strange continuum, it leads from the society within the skin to the society without. It maintains that health is not only a matter of physiology but a matter of attitudes and values. Values are at the heart of society. When values falter, a society is in danger; when *that* heart stops, a society dies. To Norman Cousins, personal health and social health are one. We can do no better than to give him the toast which he gave to himself in a twilight hour: "Be of good heart to your great heart!" and thank him for sharing this same great heart with us. ■

Dr. Joel Elkes is a distinguished-service professor emeritus of Johns Hopkins University and serves as professor of psychiatry and director of behavioral medicine at the University of Louisville.

Irish Humanism

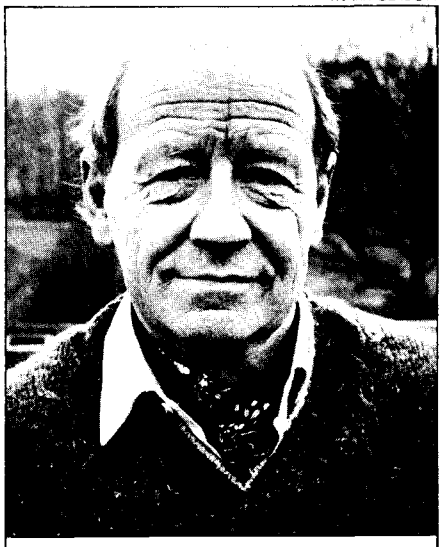
The Stories of William Trevor
King Penguin, 799 pp. paper, $8.95
Fools of Fortune
by William Trevor, Viking Press, 239 pp., $12.95
Reviewed by Bruce Allen

DURING THE LAST fifteen years or so, the Irish writer William Trevor has achieved both high public visibility and genuine literary eminence. His eight novels and five short story collections have received an increasingly good press. Dramatized versions of his stories, as well as of his numerous plays written for radio, television, and stage, have been frequently performed in England, where Trevor now lives, and occasionally in this country.

Reviewing the 1975 volume *Angels at the Ritz and Other Stories,* Graham Greene called it "surely one of the best collections, if not the best collection, since Joyce's *Dubliners.*" Trevor's reputation as a major contemporary writer pretty much dates from that tribute.

Trevor's virtues are all the appropriate ones for the short story: a clear-eyed, uncluttered prose style and a wonderful ear for dialogue; virtuoso plotwork and masterly narrative economy; a gift for creating vividly believable characters out of quickly sketched, suggestive essentials; and an ability to portray the thoughts of several characters successively and persuasively. Furthermore, he has a tendency to conclude a story by stepping in—omnisciently, when there isn't a first-person narrator—to make a climactic summary

MARK GERSON



William Trevor.

of the meaning of what we have just experienced. Somehow, this almost always works to perfection. Yet the stories can't be called perfect. They tend toward sentimentality, owing perhaps to Trevor's concentration on the tension between people's "romantic" daydreams and their usually unsatisfying real lives.

The Stories of William Trevor is an omnibus containing everything from his previously published collections. The stories concern the patchwork variety and confusion of life itself. They show families riddled by sexual incompatibility or ruined by divorce. Adolescent boys agonize, unable to see any difference between romance and sex. Lonely women are victimized and humiliated by the very men from whom they expect perfect happiness. Sons and daughters fail to see that their parents, aging and weakening faster than seems possible, need them; or, overpowered by responsibility and guilt, the children stay at home forever and grow too timid to engage the world outside their families' horizons.

In most of his stories, Trevor focuses instantly on a character's idiosyncrasy or obsession. He's astonishingly adept at depicting the hesitant passions that surface, ever so tentatively, in meek and self-effacing people. Yet this empathy with the downtrodden isn't the only string to his bow; he's fair to his seducers and egotists, too. Nothing human gets short shrift in these stories.

Angels at the Ritz indeed displays Trevor's finest work. Besides the title story's trenchant analysis of suburban wife-swapping, there is a penetrating character study of a "cold," half-human loner in "A Complicated Nature," and a vision of elderly solitude and its consequences in the lovely "Mrs. Acland's Ghosts." To my mind the latter is the most compassionate and comprehending of all Trevor's stories.

The requirements of the novel form, such as lengthy theme development and extensive characterization, may run counter to Trevor's superb skills as a miniaturist. Many of his readers have felt that this writer's novels are overall less vivid and involving than the best of his short fiction. That's the way I feel about his new novel, *Fools of Fortune.*

Its title characters are the Anglo-Irish Quinton family, mill-owners ensconced in an estate called Kilneagh in the rural village of Fermoy, northeast of Cork. The opening chapters, narrated by the Quintons' son William, recall his youth during the years of World War I. Kilneagh is first depicted as an idyllic demi-paradise that is scarcely aware of even the violence and bloodshed within Ireland. Then the "rebellion" of 1916 creeps close. The Quintons make known their sympathy for Irish Home Rule; "For this, we were seen

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by many as traitors to our class and to the Anglo-Irish tradition." A workman who has sold information to the British "Black and Tans" is executed, and in an atrocious act of revenge, Kilneagh is virtually burned to the ground and its occupants and retainers murdered or left for dead.

"Willie's" narration goes on to describe the relocation of the remaining family in Cork, his own school years, and his distraught mother's drunkenness and progressive madness. It breaks off shortly after we learn of his love for his beautiful English cousin Marianne and his apparent determination to avenge his family at long last. Marianne then tells the story, describing her school experiences, her return to Kilneagh in search of William, and the long dying fall of her life thereafter—awaiting her lover's return from his self-imposed exile and caring for their illegitimate daughter, Imelda. Imelda, who briefly assumes the narration, is a demented visionary afflicted by nightmares in which she sees the destruction of Kilneagh over and over again. The story ends with William and Marianne reunited in old age, "grateful for what they have been allowed, and for the mercy of their daughter's quiet world, in which there is no ugliness."

Fools of Fortune is overplotted and strained, but it contains many wonderful things. Trevor is at his best in such quiet moments as the death of the Quintons' housemaid, Josephine, made memorable by her moving prayer for the peace of the rebellion's victims: "Console them everywhere." He contrives an amusingly Dickensian scene in the office of a solicitor who is obviously modeled on Mr. Jaggers of *Great Expectations*. His dialogue effortlessly encompasses both high drama and low comedy. I was especially taken with some schoolboys' fantasies about a night watchman's supposedly lascivious wife: "She spends four hours in Confession every Tuesday. The priests go mad with excitement."

This makes it all the more disappointing that the story proceeds so slowly. William's thoughts and second thoughts are given such prominence that the drama of the actual events is worse than minimized; it's practically suppressed. There are two glaring examples. The description of Kilneagh under siege is so elliptical, as seen through the injured Willie's delirious exhaustion, that we don't really understand what has happened till long afterward. Then late in the book we learn that William, still traveling surreptitiously between Fermoy and his adopted home in Italy, has learned some time ago of his mad daughter's existence; we weren't told at the time, and now the information simply trickles through another of his reveries.

Novels are supposed to dramatize and render major crises in their characters' lives. The great weakness of *Fools of Fortune* is that Trevor too often settles for merely sketching what he should develop. He's fortunate that D.H. Lawrence isn't alive to review this book. ■

Bruce Allen is an SR contributing editor.

Requiem for a Tough Guy

Dashiell Hammett: A Life
by Diane Johnson, Random House, 319 pp., $16.95
Reviewed by Anna Shapiro

ALMOST ANYONE whose name has public resonance gets a biography these days. Dashiell Hammett has recently rated two. He is famous as the author of *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Thin Man*, as a man who defied Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the Fifties, and as the mentor and lover of Lillian Hellman. Hellman herself has greatly contributed to the Hammett legend in her memoirs, though Hammett told her when she said she wanted to write his biography, "That'll be a book about a girl named Hellman with an occasional reference to a friend named Hammett." Hellman still wanted a biography, but had some difficulty finding the writer she would trust with her memories and his letters. Diane Johnson seemed the right choice, having written in her fiction and criticism about subjects salient to Hammett's life—crime, politics, literature—and she could, as a screenwriter, claim Hollywood as her territory. But it is Johnson's particular powers of mind that make this biography an excellent book.

Hammett was, of course, right about what his girlfriend would do with his biography. He pointed the way to *Pentimento* and *Scoundrel Time* as he had to the play *The Children's Hour*. (He had urged the untried 29-year-old Hellman to write a play, suggesting she use a story he'd come across in a "compendium of criminal case histories" about "a Scottish girls' school that had to close because of a lesbian scandal surrounding the owners.") Hellman is a self-dramatist as well as a dramatist. Johnson on the other hand values objectivity and restraint, like Hammett. Both Hammett and Johnson accept the harsher things the world has to offer, though for Hammett this points a moral. His choices in life reveal the same lopsidedness that trivializes his fiction: he acknowledges *only* what is harsh.

Johnson is very good on "men's men"; one of the harsher realities she accepts is the gulf between the sexes. She appreciates Hammett as a man who "liked male society, whether of Pinkerton agents or hospital inmates or men in the army and even prison." Whatever he had of a career was connected to these male domains. Being a Pinkerton agent was the first job the often-drunk high school dropout could stick. From there he went into the Army during World War I, where he served—mostly on his back—fifteen miles from the Hammett home near Baltimore. By then he had the diseases that would dog him throughout his life: venereal disease, which was an easy cure the first times

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around, and the far more damaging tuberculosis. But TB had its benefits, as it did for many poor boys. It gave him the leisure to read and to educate himself, and it incapacitated him for just about anything in the way of work except writing.

It gave him leisure for other favored pursuits as well—drinking, gambling, and women, chiefly "a little nurse" he picked up in a veterans hospital out West. When he got her "in trouble" he did the right thing. In

Dashiell Hammett.

San Francisco he looked around for a way to support his wife and child, but work was difficult for a man so weak that he had to lean on a line of chairs to get to the bathroom. That was 1921. By the time he was making money with his books, 1929, he hadn't lived with his wife and daughters for years.

One of the reasons this biography is so rich is that Hammett spent so little time with his women and thus was always writing to them. His letters sometimes give Johnson a minute-by-minute account, especially in the years when Hammett found he couldn't write much of anything but letters—most of his life. He believed that "nearly all writers make too much of things as a rule"; "I'm not sure talk oughtn't to be limited to women and sports." Naturally he did not so limit himself, but there is an obvious connection between his absences and the subjects on which he adjured silence. Love, for one. That drove Lillian so wild that after thirty years without a declaration she wrote up an affidavit for him to sign that said, "What but an unknown force could have given me, a sinner, this woman?/Praise God." Johnson adds, "It made him laugh." He signed it.

Johnson makes a good case for Hammett's being happiest when deprived. He managed to create deprivation out of plenty. Being a Pinkerton had given him the material to be a writer, and his pride and love of books completed the job. Friend and fellow Hollywood screenwriter Nunnally Johnson says "there was nothing in writing that interested [Hammett] but the money." This may or may not have been true. He deprived himself of his chosen work when his five novels had made him rich, but it was a worse deprivation than his colleague guessed: Hammett was "to sit down at the typewriter and put in his time . . . for more than twenty more years; it was the organizing theme, the torture, the meaning to him of his life, that he should not abandon the fiction of his work." He found escape in drink and felt silly about nearly killing himself—he didn't believe in complaining, either. It must have been a terrific relief to get into the Army again for World War II, in which he had abundant, enforced, and do-able work as editor of the camp newspaper. Others might have regarded Adak, one of the Aleutian Islands, as a hardship post, but Hammett wrote of Alaska, "I'm still having more or less a love affair with this country."

Before the war the FBI already was keeping track of Hammett's affiliations with the Screen Writers Guild and with other "communist front" organizations—and probably some communist ones too—but hilariously didn't even notice when he entered the Army. Afterward, an unhappy civilian again, Hammett got himself into jail for refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee; Lillian Hellman says she still doesn't know for sure if he was in the party. When he got out, the government continued to deprive him by slapping a lien on his income for back taxes, so he needed money. His last stab at a book is about a down-and-out fellow whose "history is almost exactly Hammett's." Liquor, TB, jail, persecution, and poverty took their toll, but smoking did the rest: by the end so little oxygen was getting to Hammett's brain he didn't know which side of a book was up.

The two recent biographies of Hammett are about him as author. While parallels and congruities between the life and work are amply demonstrable, Hammett's novels are no better than Edmund Wilson thought them when he mocked the mystery writer as "duh toast of duh intellectuals." It has taken a novelist of Johnson's sensibility to reveal the man's character. *Dashiell Hammett* reads like a novel, and like a novel it didn't have to be about a famous person, proving a point Johnson herself made in an essay on Colette: ". . . the real lives of authors, like those of saints and politicians, and of everyone who sets up as moralist or whose work is ultimately didactic, do have a strange exemplary power. Or maybe all lives do." I think Hammett, who was exemplary as a hero, a heel, and a regular guy, would like that. ■

Anna Shapiro is an SR contributing editor.

BOOK BRIEFS

The Viaduct
by David Wheldon
George Braziller, 157 pp., $12.95

THIS IS A hypnotic, disturbing novel of an alternate world. The main character, known as "*A.*," is released from prison and sets out on a vague journey along an abandoned railway viaduct in order to avoid rearrest for sedition. The world we enter with him is mythical and threatening in the way of an unpleasant dream; the symbolism can be overwhelming. Wheldon writes in a single breath. His energy, more than anything else, moves the book along, as there is no compelling plot and very little realistic physical detail.

The world is infected with ennui and peopled with puppets who come and go seemingly at random,

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prisoners either of their own instincts or of some unnamed outside force. Freedom is vanity and an illusion. The problem is that we never learn much about these characters and so never care much about them. Nor do we get a clear picture of what their world looks like. This may add to the hypnotic quality of the book, which is its dominant element and its strength, but it also fails to completely satisfy.

The Viaduct was chosen by Graham Greene and William Trevor as the first annual winner of the Triple First Award, a prize offered by the British publishers The Bodley Head for the "best first novel." It's easy to see why: the book is carefully woven and uncompromising in the risks it takes to create its effects. It has energy and a personality that distinguishes it from so many current books. But its strengths are also weaknesses. In the end we don't really care what happens to *A.*, because he is too much a symbol; the ironies of his situation do not move us enough because they are too generic, too dreamy, and too obvious.

—GREG MICHALSON

Angels
by Denis Johnson
Alfred A. Knopf, 209 pp., $12.95

JOHNSON'S FIRST novel starts on a bus and ends in a gas chamber. To mention this does not ruin the book's suspense, because *Angels* is not about what might happen to its characters, but about what is bound to happen. It is a novel about fate. Near the beginning, its male protagonist tries to declare his independence of money by burning $200, but his Bic lighter blows up and mutilates his hand. "This kind of thing just keeps on happening until you're dead," Bill Houston says.

Bill is a drunk and a thief, and he and his new lady friend, Jamie, who is on the run from a bad husband, inhabit bars, bus stations, and cheap hotels; they are losers from the start. Like Bill, Jamie has no luck at all. She is gang-raped, becomes addicted to pills and booze, always finds herself among freaks and religious fanatics, and finally goes insane.

The novel is thin, in length as well as subject matter, and at times the apocalyptic tone, the despair, and the helpless and hopeless eccentricity of its characters seem forced. But in two ways the book succeeds marvelously. It is carefully wrought, line to line, and by the end of the book the reader achieves empathy with its characters. *Angels* is a fine first novel.

—SPEER MORGAN

August
by Judith Rossner
Houghton Mifflin, 376 pp., $15.95

ROSSNER'S ONE gift may be her ability to keep a finger on the pulse of popular culture, no matter how shallow. It is no surprise then, in these days when pop psychologizing is big business, that the setting of her predictably slick and soulless seventh novel is an analyst's office (it is her third novel since *Looking for Mr. Goodbar).* Rossner attempts to develop, through a repetitive string of contrived therapy sessions, the parallel stories of two New York women: Dr. Lulu Shinefeld, a dreary 40-year-old psychotherapist, and one of her patients, a whiny Barnard freshman named Dawn.

Dawn has had an absurdly traumatic childhood. Besides her confusion from having been raised by two lesbians, she talks about her dead father, who was gay, her suicidal mother, who was a manic-depressive, and a parade of mealy-mouthed Adonises who crave her California-girl good looks, not her mind. Lulu has her share of problems, too. Estranged from her daughter, divorced from her husband, and trysting with a rather obnoxious and unhappily married colleague, she is given to indecorous excesses like picking up anonymous younger men at East Hampton cocktail parties.

Rossner fails to invest either of these self-absorbed women with enough dynamism or depth to evoke the reader's sympathy. Part of the problem is that by using the psychiatric sessions as the structural framework of her story, she distances the reader from all action. Psychoanalysis can be an experience of creativity and illumination, but Rossner uses the couch to induce sleep.

—ANDREA BARNET

Rolling Breaks and Other Movie Business
by Aljean Harmetz
Alfred A. Knopf, 250 pp., $13.95

HARMETZ COVERS the movie business for *The New York Times.* As expected, she is impressively knowledgeable, a decent writer, and a consistently able reporter. Her pieces, however, are essentially newspaper pieces. Reading them between two hard covers only exposes the fact that they are perishable goods.

More than half of these twenty-five essays are profiles and as such must be measured against Kenneth Tynan's luminous essay on Louise Brooks, or Joan Didion's *John Wayne: A Love Song,* or even the trenchant Tom Shales sketches. But Harmetz is not in this league; her profiles are soft-edged and wishy-washy. When Tynan describes Louise Brooks, he notes "the sleek jet *cloche* of hair" or comments that "the protective curve of her neck is unforgettable." Harmetz might describe a subject as having "curly black hair, large blue eyes, and a Hollywood manner"; Jack Nicholson is "all charm and antic good humor." These phrases only produce vaporous images that dissolve into thin air.

When Harmetz encounters stars, she loses her skepticism and critical perception: in short, her vision. We

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get dozens of mundane quotations from stars, interrupted only by collaborative assents from spouses or colleagues. Clint Eastwood's wife tells us, "Clint usually exercises an hour a day. It makes his machinery feel better." Columnist Shirley Eder says of Barbara Stanwyck, "Barbara has learned to make do with her life."

Harmetz's essays on business are meatier; she lets facts tell the story. There is one short, incisive, and sad piece on a man named Barry Jagoda who gambled everything on a script he believed in, only to find that ignorance of the proper Los Angeles address can cost a man his dream. This chapter, though, is too brief. Most of *Rolling Breaks* reads like yesterday's newspaper.

—BILL GOODRICH

Cathedral: Stories
by Raymond Carver
Alfred A. Knopf, 230 pp., $13.95

HAVING READ this volume, I want to read everything Carver has written. The language is crisp and lively, and the insights startling. He's a fine storyteller who knows the language.

In "Cathedral" a man's wife has invited her blind male friend to visit. The husband is transformed when he tries to describe a cathedral to the blind man, finally closing his own eyes to help the man draw one on paper. The same shock of perception occurs in other stories, such as "Feathers," "Chef's House," and "A Small, Good Thing." In "Feathers" a man and his wife go to visit a friend from work. The friend has an ugly baby, a pet peacock, and a wife who keeps a plaster cast of her once-awful teeth on the TV. The visitor's wife plays with the ugly baby—"Bar none, it was the ugliest baby I'd ever seen"—and their lives are never the same again.

Carver has a talent for defining the kind of moment that changes a life.

—J. J. MALONEY

Disturbances in the Field
by Lynne Sharon Schwartz
Harper & Row, 368 pp., $14.95

SCHWARTZ'S FIRST novel, *Rough Strife*, was nominated for an American Book Award. Her second novel, *Balancing Acts*, received no similar recognition, but it helped solidify her reputation as a graceful stylist and a careful plotsman, able with a few deft strokes to draw the reader wholeheartedly into the destinies of her characters. Now comes *Disturbances in the Field*, and one is forced to wonder what went wrong. Long and sprawling and utterly lacking in dramatic life, it's a would-be novel of ideas grafted onto a would-be family tragedy. It sinks like a large, misshapen stone.

As if story line had suddenly become a sin, Schwartz holds her new novel open to the aimlessness of everyday life. The still center of *Disturbances in the Field* is narrator Lydia Rowe, a chamber musician, mother, daughter, and wife. Her existence is an endless series of all-but-closed loops, a whirlpool of family and friends. She gives us her past in meandering flashbacks: summers at the shore with her straight-arrow parents and spacy sister, college years at Barnard with three roommates who play at being intellectuals. The four young women quote Plato, Aristotle, and a dozen other philosophers with the halfhearted earnestness of nonbelievers; what really engages them is the idea that Columbia men live just across the street.

When Lydia isn't ruminating on her past, she spends her time pondering the restlessness of her husband Victor and the emotional detachment of her four teen-age children. The novel contains exactly one event: halfway through, her two youngest are killed—off-camera—in a school bus crash. Lydia and Victor drift slowly apart, the story drifts nowhere in particular, and the reader drifts blissfully asleep.

—ADAM GUSSOW

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DIVERSIONS

Competition No. 37

Remember Michael Fagan? He is the young Londoner who must have, in Melville's immortal phrase, a genius for sauntering, for he sauntered last year into Buckingham Palace in the wee hours and held converse with the Queen of England while sitting on the foot of the royal bed. Surely there must have been *some* challenge:

Guard: I say, ruffian, where do you think you're going?
Fagan: To the Queen's bedroom for a spot of chat.
Guard: Right-ho. Carry on.

Out of the clink by now, Fagan has probably published his own account of this escapade, but we'd rather have your version of the conversation between Her (sleepy) Majesty and the Young Visitor. Keep it respectful, funny, and short, in reverse order.

The winner will receive $25 and a hardbound, nonautographed copy of Rodney Hall's novel *Just Relations.*

Entries for Competition No. 37 must be received by September 31, and the winners will be announced in the November-December issue. Send submissions to *SR* Competition No. 37, *Saturday Review,* Box 704, Kingston, NJ 08528. Entries become the property of *SR.*

Winners of No. 36

We asked for soap-opera dialogue as it might be composed by some famous playwright, living or dead. Our plea for brevity was complied with as usual (one contestant sent us two marginless, single-spaced pages of Henry James at his inscrutable worst), but it is in the nature of a script to require room, so we curtail our patter in favor of *The Young and the Listless*, as our FIRST PRIZE winner, Peter Larsen of Lakeview Terrace, California, imagines it might be written by Harold Pinter. The scene is a Wimpy fast-food outlet in London. Tenley and Cooper sit over the remnants of lunch:

T: Somebody said you were with Goneril last night.
C: Who?
T: Somebody. Goneril.
[Pause]
C: Touch damp last night.
T: Trifle muggy I thought.
C: Not in Hampstead.
T: I thought Goneril lived in Kensington.
C: Where?
T: Kensington. Near the Albert Hall.
C: Never been to the Albert Hall but once. Supposed to have been a pops concert but they played Rossini. Rossini isn't pops, in my view.
T: Some Rossini is more pops that other Rossini.
[Pause]
C: Italian fellow, Rossini, I believe.
[Pause]
T: Were you with her last night? Somebody said you were with Goneril last night.
C: When?

SECOND PRIZE goes to Mary Malloy of Sharon, Massachusetts, who offers something called frankly *All My Children,* as it might be done by John Millington Synge. We find Gran and Jenny in the Martin living room:

G: And is your Greg still after being paralyzed from the waist down and unable to perform his manly duty, Jenny?
J: He is that, Gran. And sorry am I that ever I made that bit of pornographic film that made him go chasing me about and falling.
G: Hard it must be for you, lass, and him breaking off your engagement and all.
J: It is surely, and me going to New York to be a high fashion model.
G: And is it Erica you'll be seeing there, who was once married to the son of my son before she was marrying his uncle, and before being after drawing that young seminarian away from his holy calling after her mother murdered her lover? Erica, who almost committed fornication with her one brother without knowing it was himself, and then became engaged to a man whose daughter was breaking the laws of God and Mother Church with that same brother, all before the time she killed another man she would wed who was lying also with the sister who would be no sister at all? Would it be our Erica you'll be seeing in New York?
J: It would.
G: Then it's thinking I am that you'll be well looked after. God reward you, Jenny Gardner, and may you stay slim, and have a long life, and a quiet life, and good health with it.

And sure there's no room for a third prize, the saints be praised! If there had been room, it would have gone to reader Larsen, who was also a winner in Competition No. 17, if memory serves (it doesn't, but our files do). His second entry was *The Young Leeches* by one Wm. Shaxper. In a tavern, Ann is nursing a grasshopper when Jason enters:

J: Ill met by barlight, underhanded Ann!
Why bid'st me secret to this yeasty place
When ferment 'twixt us long's devoured all sweet?
A: Nay, tender Jason, I but seek to suck
Fell rumor's venom from a wound which thou
Unknowing bearest.
J: Etch thy speech, thou jade
Thine envy's acid should indite more sharp.
A: So be't. I speak of thy false Melanie's
Nocturnal tryst with handsome Damien.
J: For shame, thou empty ewer! Knowst thou well
He is her brother.
A: Nay; step-brother mere.
No common blood pumps through a fam'ly vein;
The steaming blood of lovers fires the twain!
J: O, fickle Archer, curse thy slipp'ry darts!
I'll seek the maid and delve the truth or die!
[Exit]
A: Keep off, sweet Cupid, and I'll use thy name
To win back Jason in my subtle game. [Exit]

And, as Robert MacNeil says, we'll have to leave it there. Goodnight, Charlayne. And goodnight, Mrs. Petrillo.

Puzzles

Literary Crypt No. 182

HALF OF X SHLUB HQ IAZURXL MOXIEF XIB RENOZXU OIQXIEF.

—H. PLXBURG

Wit Twister No. 194

Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each blank corresponds to a letter of the word.

Someone lobbed a
— — — — — — — at Don Pedro Padilla;
It did naught but
— — — — — — — his señora's mantilla.
He was monstrously
— — — — — — — , though damage was slight—
And a — — — — — — — — — — — — — — is a terrible sight! —*Maroussia Richardson*
New York, New York

July-Aug. Answers

Literary Crypt No. 181

Not till the fire is dying in the grate, look we for any kinship with the stars. —G. Meredith

Wit Twister No. 193

searing, Erasing, reginas, regains

Tunick Double-Crostic No. 3

Sydney Harris, *Tribute to an Egg:*
In shape, it is perfectly elliptical. In texture, it is smooth and lustrous. In color, it ranges from pure alabaster to warm terra cotta. And in taste, it outstrips all the lush pomegranates that Swinburne was so fond of sinking his lyrical teeth into.

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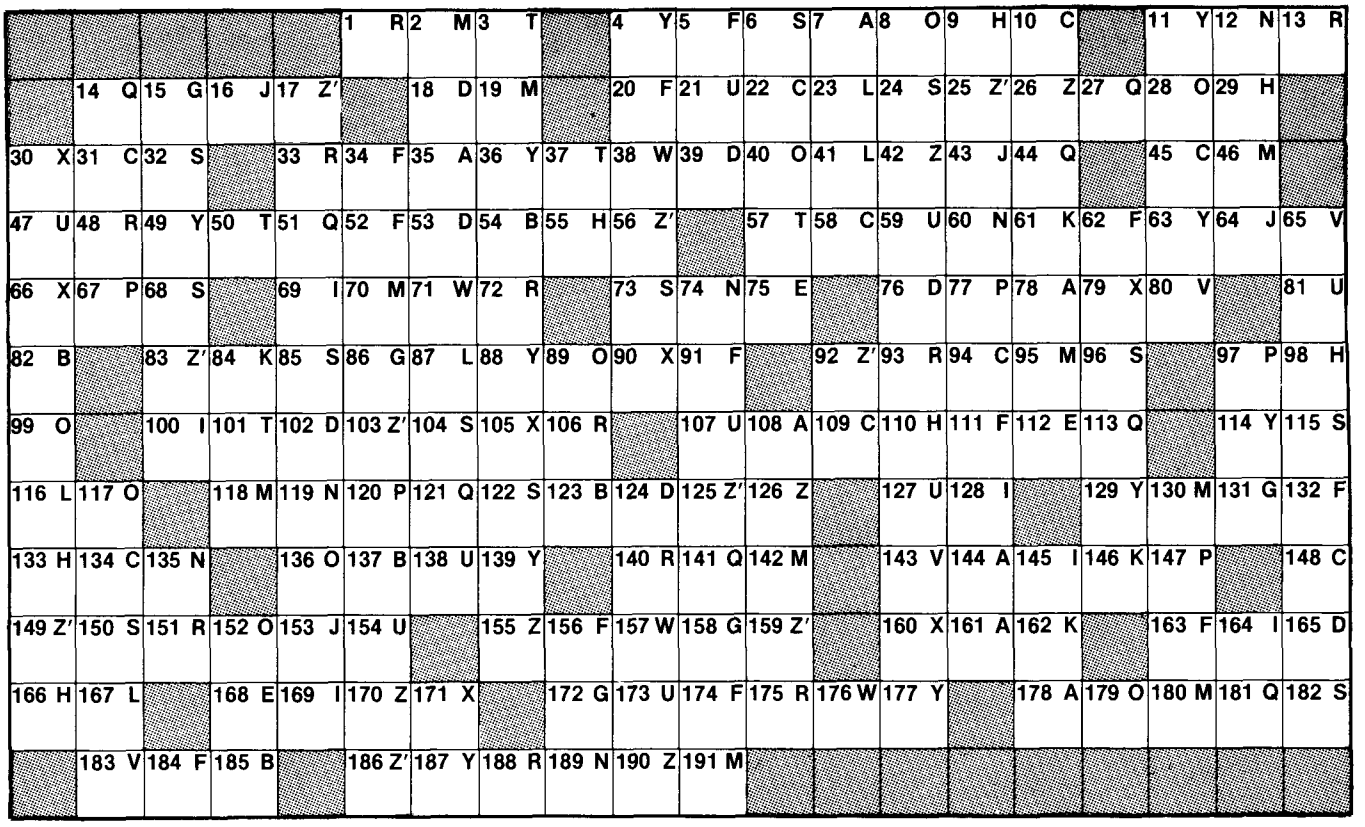

TUNICK DOUBLE-CROSTIC NO. 4

Letters of the clue answers (below) spell a quotation when put in the numbered squares (above). Reading down, the first letters of the clue answers spell the name of the quotation's author and the title of the work.

CLUES	ANSWERS
A. Carriage for hire	144 78 178 7 161 108 35
B. Having an otherworldly charm	185 123 82 137 54
C. Extravagantly emotional; rapturous	109 31 58 148 10 45 22 94 134
D. Crapshooter's double-six	39 18 102 165 124 53 76
E. Not inadequate (from back-formation)	75 112 168
F. Eurasian St.-John's-wort; Aaron's-beard (3 wds.)	20 5 34 156 52 132 163 184 111 174 62 91
G. Pulsate	158 86 131 15 172
H. Immature cucumber fruit	29 110 133 9 166 55 98
I. Slow-witted; clumsy	164 100 69 145 128 169
J. County in IA, KN, MO, and OR	43 153 16 64
K. Batty; nuts	162 84 61 146
L. Aromatic plant; Evangeline's father	41 87 167 23 116
M. Bubble, hiss, and foam	130 46 19 2 142 180 95 191 118 70
N. Cause excitement	135 74 12 60 189 119
O. Michigan city; breed of fowl	136 117 40 28 99 179 152 89 8
P. Nine (pref.)	147 77 67 120 97
Q. Gushing	44 14 51 141 113 27 121 181
R. Meddlesome busybody (2 wds.)	1 140 151 13 106 33 48 93 188 175 72
S. Redirection of feelings in analysis	73 6 150 115 68 96 122 182 32 85 24 104
T. Windlass	3 50 101 57 37
U. Of a skull part	81 47 154 127 107 21 138 173 59
V. Become flaccid	143 65 80 183
W. Stewing pot	38 157 176 71
X. Knocking sound	79 66 105 160 171 90 30
Y. Practice of assuming wolflike form	49 177 36 11 187 88 139 63 114 129 4
Z. What dilettantes do	126 170 155 42 26 190
Z'. Potpourri	159 56 149 83 186 92 25 125 17 103

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Bruce VanWyngarden

Having the Last Word

Recently on the evening news I heard yet another politician answering an accusation by saying he "had no recollection" of the event in question. It's one of those slippery phrases that government officials and politicians throw at us with alarming regularity. If they were baseball pitchers, the umpires would force them to disrobe piece by piece until the source of lubrication was found. Unfortunately there are no umpires at press conferences.

I presume the politician who "had no recollection" used that phrase to avoid saying "I don't remember." Undoubtedly he thought we would think he was pretty stupid not to be able to remember something that had or had not happened less than a year ago. I would guess he's also hoping that most people will "have no recollection" of his little verbal tap-dance come election time.

I've civic-mindedly compiled a list of some of my favorite examples of this "language gerrymandering," along with helpful suggestions as to what is really being said. When someone who is (or wants to be) on the public payroll trots out one of these, sniff the air for the aroma of fish.

"It has to be looked at in the context of the time at which it occurred."—Back then, we didn't think we'd get caught.

"The press has blown it all out of proportion."—The proportions we had in mind were more the size of the office wastebasket.

"We categorically deny it."—But then, we're in a different category than you.

"There has been no official confirmation of that at this time."—Official confirmation will be made as soon as we get our alibis straight.

"To the best of my knowledge there is no problem."—And you don't want to hear the *worst* of my knowledge.

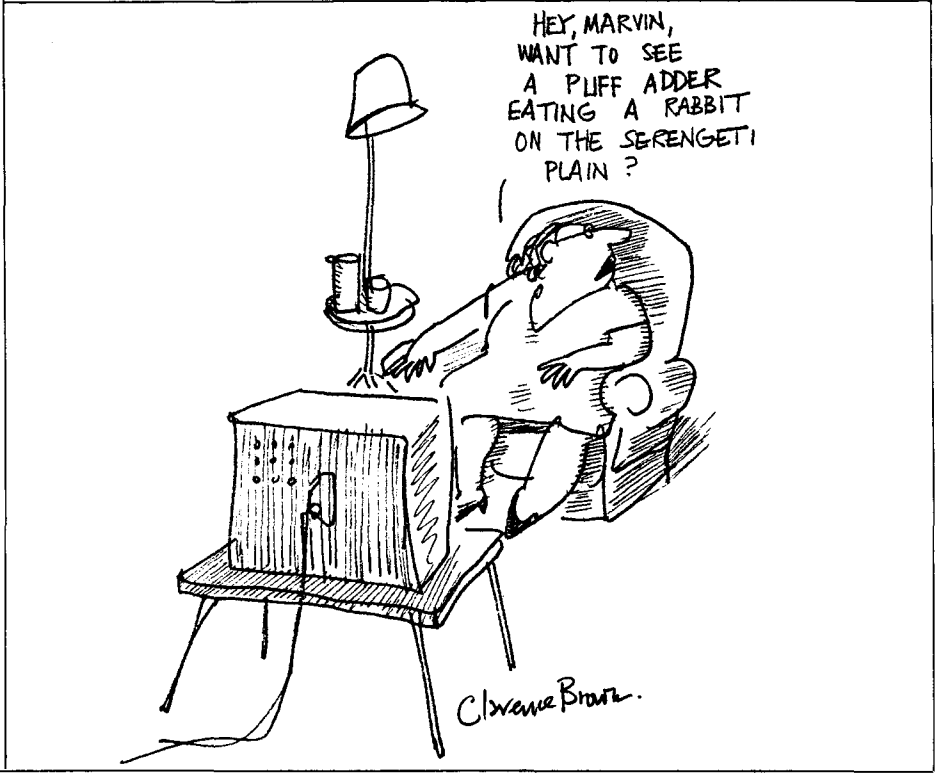
"That is simply not true."—It's not false, but it *is* complicated.

"My office is conducting a full investigation into the matter."—Can I help it if none of the guilty parties have come into my office lately?

"We won't rest until we've gotten to the bottom of this."—Somewhere in the lower echelons of this organization is an appropriate scapegoat, and we intend to find him.

"That information is classified for reasons of national security."—If the rest of the country knew what we know, they wouldn't feel very secure.

Enough! My word processor is overheating in protest. "Does not compute" is flashing on the video screen. You get the idea, anyway. These verbal contortions are so pervasive, it's as though the perpetrators all attended the same language course somewhere. As a solution, I propose that when a public official is on television, the lower right-hand corner of the screen be reserved for a translator, much like those that serve the hearing-impaired. That way, when someone says "I have no recollection," a pert, clean-cut young person will be down in the corner reminding us that what he is really saying is "I'll remember that if and when it looks like I'll have to." ■



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